

frontier

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PUPPET SHOW

ON April 10, the Sikkim Assembly decided that the 'Associate State' could do without the institution of Chogyal and should be a full-fledged unit of the Indian Union. It called for a blitz-referendum—on April 14—to decide the issue. But even before the Assembly met, the highest election official in Gangtok—of course an Indian—was reported to have visited Calcutta on urgent business—the business being, one can presume, the coming referendum. The result of the referendum was inevitable. Afterwards Kazi Lhendup Dorji and his Ministers made a beeline for New Delhi and implored Mrs Gandhi to include Sikkim, body and soul, in her democratic empire. The lady was willing and gracious. Legislation is being rushed through Parliament to amend the Constitution, and by May Mr Dorji will have the honour of being the most willing vassal that Sikkim has produced.

Mrs Gandhi justifies all this hasty, ill-managed, puppet show on the plea that she cannot ignore the democratic aspirations of the Sikkimese people. What she did in West Bengal, what she is doing in Gujarat and Bihar about democratic aspirations, what she meant by congratulating Sheikh Mujibar when he abolished the parliamentary system, in short all her love of democracy need not be recalled. But her predecessors believed in some sort of legality when they resorted to adventure. Mrs Gandhi believes in the power of the lie. Under the Government of Sikkim Act, prepared by Indian officials and agreed to by the party of the Kazi, the Sikkim Assembly has no jurisdiction to discuss the position of the Chogyal. The resolutions have to pass through the Chogyal. The Constitution of course was a bundle of deliberate contradictions which left supreme power in the hands of the Indian Chief Executive, while reducing the Chogyal to a figurehead and the Kazi to an impotent Subedar in his own wonderland. But the April 10 resolution, on the basis of which New Delhi will amend the Indian Constitution for the umpteenth time, is perhaps ultra vires of the Government of Sikkim Act. A few days earlier a high Sikkimese official had moved the court about the overriding powers of the Chief Executive, creating a flutter in government circles.

MPs have asked Mrs Gandhi why she is in such a hurry. The reply is that the Chogyal might internationalise the issue. This gives away her case. If New Delhi is so sure about the rightness of what it is doing, why fear internationalisation? It is true that the Chogyal had met at Kathmandu, during the coronation of King Birendra, foreign dignitaries, including Chinese. But

Five Fateful Years

For revised foreign mail rates see fourth cover.

this does not amount to anything more than verbal support. (Sheikh Abdullah will remember the outcry over his meeting with Chou En-lai in Algiers). The fault of the Chogyal was that he insisted on a separate identity for Sikkim, just as the Sheikh had done before he buckled in.

It is because of his legitimate insistence on this separate identity that the Chogyal sounds so authentic in his statements and the Indian ministers and officials so dubious. For instance, the Political Officer said he had not heard of the Chogyal having a radio transmitter when the Chogyal told pressmen that it had been confiscated by the Political Officer. At the same time New Delhi declared that the 'clandestine' transmitter had been "installed" illegally by the Chogyal who later surrendered it to the Sikkim Government. It was a case, though unintended, of *satyameva jayate*—truth does triumph.

Mrs Gandhi and her men are now being tough, also with Bangladesh (over Farakka and maritime boundaries) and Nepal. Nepal will now be charged international prices for scarce commodities supplied by India; and Mr Chavan has added to the Five Principles—Panchshil—so far as Nepal is concerned: besides non-interference in internal affairs, there should be a recognition of "sensitivity" in mutual relations, i.e. there should be no public demonstrations over Indian actions. The new toughness is a product of the Rajasthan explosion and the umbrella of the friendship pact with Russia which helps New Delhi to get away with many things. But Mrs Gandhi does not know that her toughness is not without the comic touch, it is not convincing because of the big begging bowl which she always carries. It is the characteristic of a beggar government that it is always weak with the strong, and strong with the weak.

A correspondent writes:

There is jubilation among the elite here — the jubilation of a satellite country — over an Indian satellite launched by a Russian rocket. Another kind of jubilation is sweeping through Indochina as liberation forces enter Phnom Penh and are poised for the final blow against Thieu.

The liberation of Cambodia, compared to the protracted struggle in Vietnam, has taken just a little over five years. Prince Sihanouk was ousted on March 16, 1970. In April a summit conference of the Indochinese peoples was held in a Laos-Vietnam-China border region. It was attended by Prince Sihanouk, Prince Souphanouvong, Phan Van Dong and the NLF President Nguyen Huu Tho. The conference declared that the objective of the parties was independence, neutrality and prohibition of foreign troops.

In May the Americans and the South Vietnamese invaded Cambodia, thus dragging the country into a destructive war. The forces suffered an abject defeat at the hands of the Cambodian guerillas and the Vietcong.

Five years is a short period but Cambodia will never forget it. About a million troops and civilians have died or been wounded; one-half of a population of 7 million has been reduced to refugees and a flourishing, beautiful country turned into wanton waste.

Cambodia will never be the same again. The tasks facing the broad-based Government of national unity are immense. The end of aggression does not mean end of imperialist manoeuvres. Internal tensions will surface and the bourgeoisie in Cambodia will not be passive. But the fighting people of Cambodia will come through, they are not Indians.

In South Vietnam, shortly after the NLF announced that it would attack Saigon for military victory if political negotiations were not started soon, Thieu has resigned. He had no option.

Pentagon analysis have been privately telling reporters, according to *International Bulletin*, a Berkeley publication, that the NLF forces can easily pierce Saigon's defence. The morale of the po-

pulation is very low. Of the 13 divisions of the ARVN six—including the three best—were decimated on the rout from the northern provinces. Of the rest, four are around the capital and three in the Mekong Delta. The Makong divisions are low on morale and equipment. Lack of reinforcements is already demoralising the Saigon divisions. Saigon could become encircled, with the NLF forces cutting off Highway 4 connecting the capital with the Delta, and possibly seizing the river port of Vung Tau to the south-east, blocking river traffic to Saigon. Saigon will rely on the air force, but until early April it was almost paralysed by lack of spare parts, the loss of 200-300 aircraft and the fear of deadly accurate anti-aircraft fire.

There are reports that the ARVN has left behind military equipment worth one to two billion dollars, including 10,000 military vehicles, 200 tanks and nearly 300 aircraft. Even in 1969 it was pointed out by a U.S. committee on national security that the ARVN would not be able to stand up to communist forces. But Nixon adopted the policy of Vietnamisation. The policy failed even in 1972, but the Saigon regime was saved by the massive American bombing—in Quang Tri alone 80,000 tons were dropped. Desertions at the rate of 24,000 a month this year, rampant corruption, starving troops—all these created an impossible situation for Thieu.

Meanwhile, in the liberated areas, life has returned to normal in many places, with the PRG emphasising the theme of national reconciliation. Many Third Force individuals and groups, including eminent Buddhist leaders, are participating in the new government. Hospitals are again open, homeguard units are active and relief is being given to poor families. ARVN soldiers are lining up to join the Government. In Da Nang, thousands of Saigon officers and men mutinied and brought their weapons over to the PRG.

According to a report from members of the American Friends Service Committee in South Vietnam, the National

Reconciliation Force in Da Nang decided not to leave the city and to assist in the return of people to their homes.

On April 1, the PRG released a ten-point statement outlining their policy for the new areas. The declaration abolished the old regime, its police and armed forces and called for speedy establishment of the people's revolutionary administration at all levels. Old functionaries may remain but they must serve the new administration. Democratic freedoms, freedom of religion, equality between the sexes and equality of ethnic minorities are guaranteed. The PRG stand is one of "great national unity". All people are free to carry on their business but they must keep law and order and support the revolution. All industrial establishments, handicraft shops and public facilities are ordered to continue operation. Business circles are guaranteed their ownership. Farmers are encouraged to rehabilitate agriculture. Soldiers, officers, police and civil servants of the Thieu regime who leave the enemy ranks are offered help to earn a living or return to their home villages.

In Cambodia, starving desperate government troops have eaten one or two of their paymasters and the bodies of dead Khmer Rouge. But it is rather obvious that the PRG people do not eat children whom Mr Ford is so anxious to save. Besides, most of the 'orphans' being lifted are not orphans at all. The sentimental nonsense about Vietnamese children has a purpose. A letter from a top Saigon official, made public by opposition politicians, quotes the American Ambassador in Saigon, Mr Martin, as saying that evacuation of orphans "will create a shift in American public opinion in favour" of the Saigon regime. Martin is reported to have told the Saigon official, "Especially when these children land in the United States, they will be subject to television, radio and press agency coverage and the effect will be tremendous".

That is why President Ford received the first batch of orphans. But thanks to their bloody experience in Vietnam and the Watergate exposure, most Americans by now realise that people posing

as baby-sitters can be, and were, jolly good baby-killers on a mass scale. Many My Lais will come to light now that Thieu and his friends are in limbo.

How Artificial?

A correspondent writes:

Rejoice, we are blown sky-high! We need fret no more over low earthly things like hunger, disease, corruption, the horror of the exploitation of the people by the parasites. We are not here but there, raised into the starry firmament by our artificial satellite which, incidentally, is just about as artificial as our independence.

We have had all sorts of hoaxes. Still, this tops it all. We have served with a zamindari abolition which has perpetuated a feudal agriculture, a public sector which is a cloaked extension of the private-cum-imperialist sector, a nationalisation which has provided black money for the rich and a murderous inflation for the poor, an independent growth which has sunk us in the quagmire of dependence, a democracy which has to be kept up with police batons and bullets, and so forth. We have also had an atomic blast intended for miraculous creative purposes, but which has only swallowed vast funds swindled out of the earnings of the poor. Even so, this artificial satellite business represents the ultimate in the art of deception.

But the trouble is, when things are falling apart and the centre can no longer hold, all hoaxes, even the best of them, go awry and turn into self-exposing agents. The Indian ruling class is so corrupt, inefficient and slavish and Indian technology intrinsically so backward that it is chronically incapable of producing the means of production, most of which have to be either imported or manufactured by foreign agencies here under the cloak of collaboration. When one can hardly build a single dam or hydel station or install or service a single big machine without foreign help, when one cannot repair a thermal station without importing some special steel from abroad, when one has to leave the invaluable degassing plant at the Dur-

gapur ASP unrepaired for a whole year for want of fresh foreign expertise and when one cannot design and build even a half-mile-long Howrah Bridge on one's own after 27 years of independence, the pretence of independently blasting atomic devices and sending up satellites into space indeed appears too ludicrous for words.

Furthermore, what could be more wonderful than an Indian satellite launched from Russia with a Russian rocket? Well, the operative term is "artificial" which is the most perfect attribute of the Indian ruling class. Finally, the whole process holds up more glaringly than anything the idyllic dependence of our rulers on the present Soviet State machine, the fact of the Indian puppet being dangled on the paws of the Russian bear, to be cuddled, squeezed or tossed up in the air at will.

University Politics

Addressing the 118th anniversary celebrations of Calcutta University, the Chief Minister, Mr Siddhartha Ray, said that academic institutions should be purged of politicians including those of his own party. It is obvious that this could have no immediate relevance to the situation in Calcutta University, though political rivalries and groupism are as much a part of its life as that of any other academic institution in the State. What Mr Ray had in mind when he spoke of politicians trespassing on academic life and vitiating its atmosphere can be puzzled out only in the context of a recent sequence of happenings in a neighbouring university.

Mr Ray cannot have been unaware that it is the intense factionalism within the student and youth wings of his own party that has brought about the ludicrous impasse at Rabindra Bharati University. If he is unable to restrain such in-fighting the reason is he owes his own power to the good offices of the various faction-chiefs. He knows only too well that he cannot do without his rebellious satraps and cannot do anything to stop their blackmail, even if he wanted to. That he is

at last speaking of "politicians" playing havoc with normal academic life does not indicate any repentance on his part, far less a desire to cease relying on the students and youth leaders to hold on to power. It perhaps reflects the sense of helplessness of someone hoist with his own petard.

Thus what prompted Mr Ray's advice to eminent academics to refrain from politicking was a particularly rollicking charade a few blocks and streets away further north-west. The Vice-Chancellor of Rabindra Bharati University, Dr Roma Chaudhuri has been staying away from her office for fear of molestation or worse at the hands of students, teachers and employees. The latter have held meetings and taken out processions demanding her dismissal and publicly proclaiming that they no longer recognise her as their Vice-Chancellor. Determined not to allow her to resume office, they have reopened the University in defiance of her express order to suspend classes indefinitely. Their complaint is that she brought hired hoodlums from outside, apparently belonging to another faction of the ruling party, to counter their own disorderly conduct aimed at her removal from office.

The Vice-Chancellor is an old hand at playing politics and knows the ropes; she is not reputed to be particularly squeamish about playing on the factionalism of the party she is serving to further her own interests. The Government knows this and finds itself in a quandary having failed to persuade her to relinquish office. Nor, apparently, can she be prevailed upon to resume work at the university and face the unruly students and staff. She has dug herself in and served Mr Ray's government with a hot potato by refusing to be winkled out. It is this funny stalemate which provoked Mr Ray's rueful reflections on the plague of politicians in the academic world. But the pleasure of those gloating over the spectacle of Mr Ray stewing in his self-engendered troubles can only be shortlived, for his government may resolve the imbroglio by kicking Dr Chaudhuri upstairs.

Sikkim : The Background Story

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

THE modern history of Sikkim began in 1642, with the consecration of the then King (Phuntsog Namgyal) as the first Chogyal. The Namgyals had been ruling over the Chumbi Valley and the Teesta Valley for at least three centuries before this. And His Highness Miwang Chogyal Champo Palden Thondup Namgyal P.V. (India), O.B.E. (Great Britain), Comander De L'ordre de L'etoile neire neire (France), is the twelfth and present Chogyal of Sikkim.

During the days of British rule in the Indian sub-continent, Sikkim was a protectorate, the British controlling her foreign policy, defence and communications. The British formally recognized her as a separate independent country, with the Maharaja having the same status as that of any other of the seven hundred ruling princes in India, but that too they did solely with a view to fulfilling their object of creating buffer States in the border regions of their empire in this sub-continent. In reality, Sikkim was out and out a British colony. After the emergence of India as an independent country, her relation with Sikkim was maintained for some time on the basis of the the former Protectorate. Negotiations first started with India in 1947. In 1950, a treaty was signed between the Government of India and Sikkim in which the Indian Government was only responsible for External Affairs, Defence and Communications. The Chogyal was the real head of State exercising vast legislative and executive powers; yet in actual practice all this too came under the virtual control of the Indian Government. The 'Dewan', the topmost officer, an IAS or ICS, who was to be appointed by the Chogyal for internal administration, happened to be selected by the Indian Government. He took over the administration in August 1949.

Despite all these things, in accordance with the treaty, the Indian Government recognised the separate and free existence of Sikkim. Even Mr

Nehru once proclaimed in Parliament that Sikkim, in spite of being a protectorate, is a separate and even an independent State.

The national crisis in Sikkim in 1973 caused the masses to curb the powers of the Chogyal and to transfer the reigns of government to elected representatives. For months the people had fought for democracy and ultimately an agreement was signed between the Government of India, the Chogyal and the political parties in Sikkim on May 8, 1973. As a consequence of this new treaty, even the very little autonomy that Sikkim used to enjoy under the treaty of 1950 was further curtailed. An Indian officer was appointed the Chief Executive of Sikkim and entrusted with the duty of supervising the internal administration. He is also the President and the Speaker of the 'democratic' Assembly of Sikkim, the Indian representative, the link between the Assembly and the Chogyal, and also the Chief Priest. The Chogyal enjoys the formal right of appointing this officer but that is just rubber-stamping authority and he has no controlling power over his authority. He became a constitutional head, symbolising the unity of the different types of people in Sikkim, but having no power, not even that of the spiritual head of State in spite of his being the incarnate or Chogyal Sidkeong; the eighth consecrated Chogyal, and reincarnate of the famous Karmapa Lama of Kham. By planting a Chief Executive appointed by the Indian Government, India struck at the very roots of the separate and free existence of Sikkim.

In 1974, for the first time in the history of Sikkim, democracy, it is said, was obtained through the single transferable vote. But this was a complete farce as the elections were held under the strict control and supervision of the Election Commission of India and the polling officers and presiding officers were Indian and the polling booths were guarded by the CRP and, accord-

ing to Mr H. L. Bhandari, President of the Students' Joint Action Committee, the innocent and illiterate people were paid to cast their vote in a particular ballot box having a particular symbol. Marwanis supported the Congress party with large funds. Headed by Kazi Lhendup Dorji, this party secured 31 out of 32 seats in the Sikkim Assembly. The minimum age of a contestant should have been 25 years, but there were two who were 23 and 21 years old—Mr Nar Bahadur Khatiwara and Miss Hemlatta Chhetri respectively—and both were elected. Independents were not allowed to form a new party, so the candidates contested as independents. There was violence at their meetings, speakers were beaten up, mikes broken, mikes and jeeps seized and candidates roughed up and all this happened in the presence of the CRP. This happened in Sombaria, Namchi, Gangtok and several other places. Cases were filed but no action was taken, and this shows on whose side the Indian Government was during the elections.

When the elections were over, the Government of India without any prior consultation with the Chogyal and the Sikkimese people, framed a Constitution Bill, in 45 minutes—the so-called Government of Sikkim Bill 1974. A lot of people of Sikkim were against the Bill in which there was provision for the Sikkimese people to participate in the social, economic and political institutions of India, which they did not want. Though they strongly protested against the Bill, it ultimately came into force on July 4, 1974, when the Chogyal gave his final assent to it under pressure from the Indian Prime Minister, the pro-Indian politician, Kazi Lhendup Dorji, and his colleagues. This Act meant the virtual annexation of Sikkim.

On August 24, 1974 the Kazi and Mr K. S. Bajpai, the Political Officer in Sikkim, made a request to the Government of India for participation and representation in the Indian Parliament, an invalid and unconstitutional resolution passed by the Sikkim Assembly. The Kazi did not have the mandate of the people to make a request in this regard. The Bill provides

for two representatives of Sikkim's Assembly to sit in the Indian Parliament. The Government of India hurriedly introduced the Bill (35th Amendment) on September 2, 1974, in Parliament and it was passed in both houses of Parliament. This is how Sikkim became an associate State of India.

Protesting against the 35th Amendment Bill, the students of Sikkim organised a peaceful demonstration on October 10, 1974. Both boys and girls were mercilessly lathi-charged and teargassed by the CRP. After the dispersal of the crowd, many of the students ran into shops seeking shelter and others ran to the roof tops of the Bazar. The CRP systematically went into each shop beating out the students, rifle butting and beating them with lathis. Even small children and old folk were forcibly dragged out of their houses by breaking doors and windows and were ruthlessly beaten with lathis. The General Secretary of the Sikkim Prajatantra Party, Mr N. B. Bhandari, a Nepali, who is anti-Indian in the sense that he wants to retain the separate identity of Sikkim, was mercilessly tortured by the CRP. About fifty students were hospitalised for several weeks because of their serious injuries and wounds.

Student participation in demonstrations and sloganeering were strictly forbidden from October 11, Mr Hem Lall Bhandari, also a Nepali, President of the Sikkim Students Association, and others were expelled from their schools by the Chief Minister.

The situation now is that the Sikkim Assembly does not possess any constitutional right over any important item, nor does the elected Ministry control any important portfolio. In fact neither the Assembly nor the Ministry enjoys any effective power for ruling the country, though it is being publicly proclaimed that these institutions are representative of the people, i.e. power has been transferred to the people, of Sikkim. In reality, it is the Chief Executive, selected by the Indian Government, who enjoys the power to rule the country. The very idea of giving the title, 'Chief Minister' and not 'Prime

Minister' to the head of the country, shows how the country is looked upon by India. This step was taken to crush the separate identity of Sikkim and to turn it into one of the federating units of the Indian Union.

The leader they have in the 73-year-old Chief Minister, Mr Kazi Lhendup Dorji Khangserpa, is supposed to have 96% of the so-called mandate, but even then, a bombing attempt took place but there was no investigation; he is always surrounded by Indians and not by his own people. As the Chogyal said, "The Kazi should know better; for if you lose your country, you are not going to get it back—this is irreparable."

The country is in turmoil. The General Secretary of the Prajatantra Party, Mr N. B. Bhandari said, "The country is packed with CRP who account for more than one-tenth of the population of Sikkim, and there is no chance for free movement", and, according to Mr H. L. Bhandari, while supporters of the Sikkim Congress party do not have to ask permission for processions or use of microphones, permission is always refused to him and his fellow students.

After the October 10 lathi charge, many of the students took to hiding, especially the leaders, for fear of the CRP and goondas who are paid by the Sikkim Congress and the Indian Government. It was on the 17th morning that 150 CRP surrounded 40 people who were in hiding in Tathangchen and arrested 13, even though they had no warrant for arrest issued by the Central Court in Gangtok. The thirteen, including Mr H. L. Bhandari, were taken via a jungle path, on either side guarded by the CRP, to Deorali, a village about two miles downhill. From Deorali, they were herded into a large truck, like goats, and driven at top speed and mercilessly beaten with lathis and butts of guns, to the thana, where three of the students just fell unconscious. They were then all hospitalised for three days, boys and girls, and released on the 19th on bail.

According to Mr Bhandari, there is no freedom of speech or freedom of movement in the country. "There is no real

democracy in Sikkim, what we have now is worse than autocracy Indian dictatorship without any law, principle and rules of conduct".

The Chogyal says he finds the popular Government led by Kazi Lhendup Dorji very embarrassing: "popular leaders leading a popular government supported by the unpopular CRP. This is the first time we are having armed personnel to look after our internal affairs". And he thinks that as a protectorate, Sikkim still has a separate identity and international status. He finds the movement of the youth which is fighting for Sikkim's separate identity very promising. "They are not fighting for me, but for Sikkim".

The happenings in Sikkim led India's immediate neighbours to take the matter seriously. With the exposure of New Delhi's support for former Prime Minister, B. P. Kairala of Nepal, (an opponent of King Birendra, who is now in India in exile) and with the evidence of arms support for guerilla tribesmen in Nepal, violent incidents broke out in Kathmandu. With the discovery of a pro-Indian clique conspiring to assassinate the new Bhutan King, Jigme Singye Wangchuk, before his recent coronation, there was a withdrawal of the police training team in Bhutan and restrictions on entry into the kingdom were imminent. It is reported that Bhutan in starting a trade route with Tibet and that there is now in Bhutan a Chinese medical unit. There were demonstrations in Ceylon and Bangladesh. China condemned the whole thing as an expansionist move of India.

Is India wanting to become a big power in South Asia? Has American and Russian 'big power chauvinism' also infected her? This will only strain her future relations with the neighbouring countries. India cannot afford this. As Chou En-lai said in 1971 concerning the drama of Bangladesh, India was picking up a brick which she would have to eventually drop, and drop only on her toes. With Sikkim, the brick has become even heavier.

(This was written a few weeks ago).

Letter From America

What's Happened To Super K?

ROBI CHAKRAVORTI

ON his return from the Middle East in late March Henry Kissinger gave a press conference. He looked haggard, his cherubic cheeks sagging, his owl eyes without the customary glint, the familiar timbre of his voice muted, his sentences lacking the usual tone of self-assurance.

He was physically tired, of course. But that was not the main reason for his sapless performance. He was in agony because his grand scheme is falling down, piece by piece and in a slow motion, as it were. Faisal's assassination; consolidation of a leftist regime in Portugal and signs of communist resurgence in Europe; reports of military defeat from Indochina, and at home, restive Congressmen — some are calling him secretive if not downright devious. Adding insult to injury some of the former aides of Nixon have begun a campaign of his character assassination.

Kissinger has not fallen yet, but the decline in his prestige is clear, and there is an element of Greek tragedy in it—failure to recognise revolutionary changes in the Third World and limitation of American power was like violating *moira* and the constant reiteration of power as authority looked like *hubris*. An air of nemesis seems to be hovering over him. The *Wall Street Journal* reported his aides as saying that he might resign at the end of the year.

Kissinger's decline has come with a startling swiftness. Only a few months ago, he was at the peak of his glory. His global travels were watched and reported like a spectacular road show. Journalists vied with one another in coining words to describe his unique brand of diplomacy. Kissinger himself tossed a few phrases—"two track" negotiations in Vietnam, for instance and the "linkage" concept in deals with Russia and China—making diplomacy look like science. Prominent Americans had described him as a national resources

like the towering Grand Teton or the Detroit automobile factories. The world's plaudits had come to him in the form of a Nobel Prize.

What went wrong? Why does Super K appear like a pitiful giant, a phrase Nixon coined in the prime of his power, and facing the same problem of Vietnam? The answer is that Kissinger, like his predecessors, believed in two simple formulas—power equals prestige, and stability is progress,— and these formulas are too simple for the complex reality of the changing world.

The basic continuities in U.S. foreign policy have so far been obscured by the drama of his flights to Peking and publicised conferences for detente with Russia. The old principles of power, prestige and status quo were not abandoned by Kissinger; they ruled his policies towards the entire Third World, while dealing with Russia and China he repeated the ancient diplomacy of playing upon fears of both for each other. There has been no change of heart on the basic principles. Kissinger's statements on recent events in Vietnam have opened up this fact like a secretly taped profanity suddenly made public.

Ironically, even his celebrated acts of dialogue with China, on which his reputation was justifiably built, were, in effect, acts of correction for past mistakes. These mistakes are recognised, but the lessons have not been applied to similar trouble spots in Asia. This is the heart of Kissinger's problem.

Men Rebuffed

Barbara Tuchman, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Stilwell and the American Experience in China* wrote an essay in *Foreign Affairs* two years ago with the dramatic title, "If Mao Had Come To Washington in 1945". "One of the great ifs and ironies of history," she wrote, "hangs on the fact that in January 1945, four and half years be-

fore they achieved national power in China, Mao Tse-tung, and Chou En-lai in an effort to establish working relationship with the United States, offered to come to Washington to talk in person with President Roosevelt".

Ho Chi Minh, it is well known, made similar gestures for cooperation with the U.S. Administration and they were turned down. Sihanouk's ouster is recent history and the mess that followed is there for all to see. Stanley Karnow repeated the story of Cambodian policy in great detail in a recent article in the **New Republic**.

In spite of past experiences the U.S. Government has maintained a faith in the efficiency of counter-revolution. As Barbara Tuchman pointed out, "it preferred the status quo even when the status quo was a sinking ship". Twenty or more years later, the U.S. repeated the same mistake in Cambodia and Vietnam, and it now tries to extricate itself from these mistakes with rationalisations that have been heard before.

Kissinger's argument for giving limited—not massive—aid to Vietnam and Cambodia is that the U.S. will look weak in the world's eyes if it fails its allies in distress. He did not quote Mao, but said, in effect, that if Vietnam falls, America will look like a paper tiger.

Observers have quickly pointed out the holes in his logic. The **New York Times** wrote in its Sunday Review section that according to some opinion, "America's role in Indochina has demeaned rather than enhanced the image of the United States in much of the rest of the world". The **New Yorker** wrote acidly, "America's prestige is up for sale at recession prices". David Brinkly, veteran commentator on the NBC news programme, said that when American troops were withdrawn, high

Washington officials privately predicted that the Thieu regime could hold its own for two years. "And, it's about two years now", he added, a deadly punch-line with a dead-pan face. Eric Sevareid of the CBS said that any sophisticated political observer knew that the Paris cease-fire accords will be broken by both parties and Kissinger is sophisticated enough to have foreseen this simple fact of life.

In an article entitled, "Diplomatic Blind Spot" Joseph Harsch of the **Christian Science Monitor** warned of the dangers of Kissinger's policy last year. He quoted from Kissinger's own admission of emphasis on the status quo and said that this has led to the unfortunate history of the U.S. siding more frequently with the losers than the winners. In a major foreign policy review in the **New York Times** last year Kissinger admitted the U.S. attitude as being "basically satisfied with the status quo so that when you have governments like the previous government in Portugal or the previous government in Greece, the tendency is not to change it". This is only part of the problem because the U.S. has covertly intervened in other countries and its acts of intervention have followed the same pattern of neglect of the forces of the future. "We really lack a philosophy for how to shape a new political evolution", Kissinger confessed in his **New York Times** interview.

Middle East

This defect in U.S. policy is likely to create problems in the Middle East and other areas of the world. Its staunchest allies in the Middle East are presiding over a tight coalition of forces with a tighter control over the opposition. They are sitting on a smouldering volcano. In monarchies like Jordan, Iran and Saudi Arabia, and Sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf, there are strong currents and undertows of internal change, some of them generated by the very affluence flowing from the hike in oil price. The chances are that, as in Portugal, political changes may turn out to be revolutionary and turbulent after years of surface success of these regimes. Unless the U.S. policymakers make a philosophic reassessment of the

changing scene, they will be caught off-guard again and again. There will be other Portugals and other Cambodias, through miscalculations and costly tragedies as in Chile, through its impatience with even moderate socialism.

There is little sign that any deeper philosophical reappraisal is taking place. Reassessments are on operations of policies—how much aid to Israel, how much pressure on Sihanouk to bring about a "controlled solution", how much military hardware to Thieu. Along with this kind of superficial reassessment, there is an attempt to find scapegoats for failure. The reluctance of the Congress to give requested aid to Saigon is being cited as the reason for the military defeats of the Saigon Government, recalling similarly empty exercises of "who lost China" debate in the past.

It is doubtful whether Kissinger is able to take up this crucial task. Diplomatic problems in the Middle East, Indochina, Greece, Turkey and Portugal are enough work load for him. Faults of the past have multiplied to a degree where fence-mending is all Kissinger can do.

And these faults, it is time to point out, were not in his stars, to twist a quotation from Hamlet, but in his philosophy.

Clippings

"Humanitarian Work"

TOKYO: Under the guise of "humanitarian relief work", at least two Christian voluntary agencies in Southeast Asia are receiving million-dollar annual subsidies from the U.S. Government in exchange for highly-valued political and military intelligence. The directors of two agencies in Phnom Penh—Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the Protestant-related World Vision, Inc. (WVI)—recently admitted these facts to the Rev. John M. Nakajima, General secretary of the National Christian Council of Japan. The directors told Nakajima they are currently receiving about 95 per cent of their Southeast Asia operating funds through the Agency for In-

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ternational Development (AID) of the U.S. Department of State. They admitted that this funding channel has been operating since at least mid-1973, or since shortly after the Paris Peace Accords.

The CRS appears to be the larger of the two funding recipients, at least in Khmer (Cambodia). The director of the CRS programme in Phnom Penh did not reveal its budget, but WVI director Rev. Carl Harris told Nakajima, "we give much service to the U.S. Government than we get from it". When asked to explain, Harris said, "For instance, the giving of information. We often go to places where government officials cannot go. We provide them with necessary information". Harris added that he worked directly for AID in Saigon before joining WVI in 1973.

How can such activities be rationalised in the name of "International development"? Very easily, under the terms of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 which, in President Kennedy's first major foreign policy step, led to the creation of the AID office. Among other things, the act directs that U.S. foreign aid be used "to develop internal and external security... as well as to promote economic or political stability in friendly countries". One of the largest AID projects (\$600 million funding in fiscal 1973) serving these purposes is called "Security Supporting Assistance".

Although most of the CRS and WVI funding appears to be coming out of the AID's "Indochina Postwar Reconstruction" account (primarily for "humanitarian assistance to refugees"), both of the Christian agencies have admitted their active participation in the intelligence aspects of the "Security Supporting Assistance" programme.

"Horrible things are happening in the name of the Christian church", concluded Nakajima after his recent trip to

Southeast Asia. He notes that, while indigenous Christian churches in the region are working for peace and self-development, "agencies like the CRS, serving as willing pawns of U.S. foreign policy interests, are greatly undermining these local and truly Christian efforts".

Nakajima quoted a Khmer Catholic priest who not only decried the CRS's intelligence work but also claimed that CRS refugee aid "is creating a spirit of dependence among our people".

(New Asia News)

Japan and the Vietnam Crisis

Tokyo: The dominant opinion in the Japanese government is that the Thieu regime will soon be crushed. As a result, 70 per cent of Japanese families living in Saigon had departed as of April 2.

On April 3 Foreign Minister Miyazawa Kiichi said to a committee of the lower House. "The U.S. effort in Vietnam has failed. Although the American involvement there was well-intentioned and Japan cooperated with it, the result has not been good. Outside military support is out of the question".

Reluctantly, the Government recognised that it will have to negotiate with a new government in Cambodia and re-evaluate its whole aid policy to South Vietnam.

The moves appear sudden, but not for government and business insiders. Financial leaders here were informed in early February by sources close to U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger that the situation in Vietnam would change by summer. The U.S., they were told, planned to abandon the northeast part of South Vietnam (except the coastal area including Highway 1) in order to concentrate and strengthen Saigon's forces. The plan was to negotiate a new defence perimeter nearer to Saigon.

The same sources said that there would also be major changes in the situation on the Korean Peninsula.

Kissinger was, therefore, not surprised when news of the Thieu troop pull-back appeared in the press, and did not interrupt his Middle East shuttle diplomacy.

However, things worked out differently. The uprising of 700,000 Mon-

tagnards in the Central Highlands completely upset the power balance. Kissinger saw he had miscalculated and was forced to give up his efforts in the Middle East and return home.

The Japanese government does not expect a new U.S. intervention. Rather it predicts that (1) Chinese influence over Indochina will increase, (2) the conflict between China and the USSR for hegemony over the area will create new opportunities for the U.S., and therefore for Japan.

According to the *Yomiuri Shimbun* (April 4), the Japanese government plans to propose an "Asian Forum", aiming at the settlement of Asian problems by Asians on the principle of self-determination. Despite such talk, however, Japanese policy will continue to give first priority to co-operation with Washington.

At the same time, the Japanese Government is intensely interested in how all these events will affect the Korean Peninsula.

According to a foreign ministry source, South Korean Foreign Minister Kim Dong Jo has proposed that the U.N. Command there be dissolved. The same source says that U.S. President Ford, beginning with his visit to China later this year, will seek U.S. recognition of North Korea in exchange of Chinese and Soviet recognition of South Korea. This is to be a first step in a U.S. attempt to totally revamp its Asian strategy. The source explained that Japan will be expected to play a very large role in the U.S. strategy.

Thus U.S. Defence Secretary Schlesinger will visit Japan before summer to negotiate a new agreement on defence of the seas surrounding Japan.

By the end of the summer, Japan's key role in the "security" of Asia is expected to come fully into the open.

(Akio Yamakawa, New Asia News)

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Naxalbari Through Jaundiced Eyes

OF late we have come across yet another teacher of Marxism who "was trained", so runs the blurb in the book under review*, "in Economics at the London School of Economics and holds degrees in Computer Science and law".

We learn from Dr Biplab ('biplab' means revolution, Das Gupta that a Marxist revolutionary should not lose heart when things are not going well for the movement. "Only the most amateurish among them would react to short-run successes and failures, overlooking the fact that the growth of a Marxist movement never follows a linear graph. No Marxist worth his credentials should believe in political astrology, that by such and such time the revolution will be complete, it may come sooner, it may take longer than one can visualize at the moment. A revolutionary should be a dreamer with his feet firmly on the ground".

Though the dictum is nothing new, Dr Biplab Das Gupta thinks it prudent to repeat these words of caution in the context of the Naxalbari movement. But why choose Naxalbari? The answer is there, in his book.

While the cardinal political issue projected by Naxalbari, subsequent errors or blunders notwithstanding, is that that the revolutionary situation is excellent and it is high time to prepare for a revolutionary breakthrough, Dr Das Gupta infers that the time is not yet ripe for revolution. To arrive at this inference he has managed to muddle the problem of revolution itself, using some misguided actions launched by the CPI(ML), as examples.

The revolution we talk of in politics is social revolution which means a qualitative change in social relation or,

more precisely, the relations of production. Though one of the fundamental questions of such a revolution is the question of State power, the latter is by no means synonymous with the former. To know this, one pretending to be a Marxist need not associate oneself with learned centres; he has only to study Marx, who said that at certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they have been at work. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. The meaning of revolution is clear enough but this clarity vanishes as we approach Dr Das Gupta. When he writes, "the people were not ready for revolution despite their poverty and income disparity" or "Another aspect of the Naxalite movement was its emphasis on instant revolution", he takes the word "revolution" for some particular supposed action for seizing political power. The question of seizure of power or rather State power is undoubtedly a fundamental question of making revolution a success. But that does not make revolution mean an action for seizure of power. So even if "the subjective preparation of the people for the seizure of power was overstated" and even if the Naxalites were wrong in calling for the immediate seizure of power", one cannot derive from this that the situation in India is not ripe for revolution. On the contrary, one can find, if he uses Marxist criteria, that India was already ripe for a social revolution even during the last days of the British raj. That this was so was unmistakably recognised by the agents of British imperialist interests. On June 24, 1946, P. J. Griffiths, leader of the European Group in the Indian Central Legislative Assembly, said in a speech, "India in the opi-

nion of many was on the verge of a revolution before the British Cabinet Mission arrived. The Cabinet Mission has at last postponed if not eliminated the danger". Later, on March 5, 1947 Sir Stafford Cripps said in the British Parliament that there were two alternatives before the British Government, (1) to maintain British troops, or (2) to make a political transfer on the lines of the 1947 settlement. As he admitted, the British Government "had not the power" to maintain its direct rule by force of arms. Indeed, political transfer of power was the only choice before the British to continue its exploitation and domination over India—such was the revolutionary situation prevailing at the time.

Consequently the drama of "transfer of power" was staged. But there was no question of a free choice by the Indian people of the kind of government under which they might wish to live. There was no question of a free sovereign Constituent Assembly, freely elected by universal suffrage of the Indian people. The so-called Constituent Assembly was under direct British imperialist pressure to draw up a constitution acceptable to them. For a country wishing to become independent and sovereign the foremost thing is who convenes the constituent assembly and how it is really being constituted. A necessary precondition for convening such a constituent assembly is the formation of a temporary government by the people who are to take over power. Only such a government can constitute and convene a constituent assembly. But the 'Interim Government' formed in India in July 1946 had nothing to do with the will of the people. This so-called Interim Government was formed by the British imperialists themselves and the Constituent Assembly was not constituted under the care of a qualitatively different temporary government but under the benevolent guidance of the British military and civil bureaucrats in terms of laws passed by the British.

So almost three decades ago the political realities in India were that a tide of anti-imperialist and anti-feudal struggle was surging ahead with unprecedented fury and in all-pervading

* The Naxalite Movement.
By Biplab Das Gupta
Monograph No. 1, Centre for the
Study of Developing Countries
Allied Publishers. Price Rs 40.00

dimension. So much so, that the imperialists in collusion with the Indian reactionaries declared independence for India and made all the requisite arrangements to open a parliamentary battle-front to arrest the revolutionary wrath of the Indian people, and to canalise it into a 'mock fight of parliamentary cretinism'.

Telengana

But the hatchers of an anti-people conspiracy did not succeed outright in their objective: "And then, one day early in 1948, came the greatest news of all—two thousand villages of Telengana with a population of over four million had eliminated the rule of the Nizam and had set up a parallel administration. Over an area of 13,000 square miles, where formerly mighty landlords owning anything from 500 to 1,20,000 acres used to rob the peasants by legal and illegal levies such as cash rent and gram rent, the evils of yesterday have been abolished by the people's independent committees. Village officialdom has been liquidated. Panchayats, elected on the basis of adult franchise, are being formed. People's tribunals have been established to deal with culprits. In short, a new economic and political programme has been fashioned and is now being put into operation."

This was political reality. This is history. And after having advised that one should judge a revolutionary movement's "relevance to the history, culture, social and economic conditions and political realities of the country concerned", Dr Das Gupta himself manages to skip the pages of history. Always taking his cue from the failure of revolutionary drives by the people he rushed on to his only idea about the people, that they were not "ready for revolution despite their poverty and income disparity," that while the condition of the people was miserable the large majority were not politically conscious and that "the fight for political loyalty and the fight against traditional loyalties like caste, religion, language, and even against Congress because of its long association with public memory, were not over."

Dr Das Gupta reaches this con-

clusion this time in the context of the CPI(ML) led movement. In the context of that Telengana movement he is haunted by the same idea and writes, "while a large percentage of the 3.5 million people of these four districts supported their cause, the rest of the 350 million Indians were either indifferent or hostile to the objectives of the movement. The Indian people were by and large politically behind the ruling party."

Dr Das Gupta reminds the reader that "Marxists should live with the masses and should understand their mood, and their policies and practices should be geared to the needs and aspirations of the people within the broad framework of the revolutionary objectives of Marxism."

So having lived with the masses when he understood their mood, he brings in Lenin to make a clear distinction between the "historical obsolescence" and "political obsolescence" of parliamentary institutions and peddles their utilization as a forum to serve the interests of revolution. After all the tall talk about the need to pursue the history, culture political reality, etc. of one's own country, the learned doctor eagerly picks up **Left-wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder**, a book written by Lenin in 1920 to establish his thesis on parliamentarianism, as if no change, either, historical or political, has taken place since 1920. In fact Lenin's formulation (when he writes, "clearly, Parliamentarism in Germany is not yet politically obsolete") referred to by Dr Das Gupta was made in a particular context of history and politics. It is now a matter of analysis and judgment if this formulation can fit in every historical and political context. But what is absolute truth is there when Lenin lays down as the fundamental law of revolution the following: It is not enough for revolution that the exploited and oppressed masses should understand the impossibility of living in the old way and demand changes, it is essential for revolution that the exploiters should not be able to live and rule in the old way. Only when the 'lower classes' do not want the old way, and when the 'upper classes' can-

not carry on in the old way only then can revolution triumph. This truth may be expressed in other words; revolution is impossible without a nationwide crisis affecting both the exploited and the exploiters.

The idea that this truth did not prevail in India after the Second World War and does not even now, is the mental child of those falsifiers of history, those parliamentary cretins who like the one-eyed deer can see nothing but the backwardness of the toiling masses.

"Seats in Parliament"

The second point is: even when a concrete situation demands participation of communists in parliamentary election, they should not at all strive to "get seats" in parliament; they should everywhere strive to rouse the minds of the masses and draw them into the struggle. This is how Lenin viewed the use of parliament "as a forum to serve the interests of revolution". Lenin wants you to tell people what Bolshevism is, without bothering for seats. And if you are to tell people what Bolshevism is, you have to explain the nature of State power to them, you have to tell them, "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the readymade State machinery and wield it for its own purposes." And so to seize State power means not merely the "transfer" of the bureaucratic-military machine from one hand to another, but to smash it, and that is a preliminary condition for every real people's revolution (Marx).

To analyse, to explain, to tell people the reality is one thing and to launch an action is another. If the people are not politically conscious, it is the duty of a communist, the vanguard of revolution, to make them conscious about the laws of social development, about the correlation between State power and social revolution, about the real nature of the existing State power. A communist must not indulge in so many 'ifs' and 'buts' to pronounce that immortal truth. "The communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions."

No matter what the degree of people's political consciousness is.

Dr Das Gupta's creative Marxism however, teaches things differently. For him "it is probably too early to put armed struggle on the agenda in India, but the long-run inevitability of armed struggle—which may not be very long—has not been discredited by the Naxalite experience," because "experience in India has not yet disproved the theory that it is only through armed struggle that socialism can be won in the country and shown that the statistical probability of achieving it through peaceful means is negligible". Experience has not yet disproved. So let us have more time and more experience to disprove it; do not be in a hurry to put armed struggle on the agenda. The backward people will keep the stage set for you, the Marxist vanguard of revolution!

Dr Das Gupta's experience has so far led him to a point "where there are difficulties in winning power through elections in a country where the mass media are prejudiced against the communists, where the literacy rate is low, and where religion, caste, language and similar issues can be used by the ruling party to divert attention from the need of class-based struggles". To him "past experience has shown the utter contempt of the Indian ruling class for the basic norms of democracy which it advocates." He has further seen that if the Marxist, either singly or in alliance with other parties—managed to win a majority of seats in a state, they were either denied the opportunity to form a government, or the government was brought down after its formation by various means. Evidently had his experience been otherwise Marxists would have been able to form and continue to remain in government to alleviate the misery of the people. But Lenin's experience tells a different story. In dealing with the key question of every revolution, the question of State power, Lenin writes, "The entire history of the bourgeois-parliamentary, and also, to a considerable extent, of the bourgeois-constitutional countries shows that a change of ministers means very little, for the real work of administration is

in the hands of an enormous army of officials. This army, however, is undemocratic through and through, it is connected by thousands and millions of threads with the landowners and the bourgeoisie and is completely dependent on them". It is, therefore, "the greatest delusion, the greatest self-deception, and a deception of the people to attempt, by means of this state apparatus, to carry out such reforms as the abolition of landed estates without compensation, or the grain monopoly etc. That is why, it always happens, under all sorts of coalition Cabinets that include, 'socialists', that these socialists even when individuals among them are perfectly honest, in reality turn out to be either a useless ornament or a screen for the bourgeois government, a sort of lightning conductor to divert the people's indignation from the government, a tool for the government to deceive the people . . . so it has been and so it will be as long as the old bourgeois system exists and as long as the old bourgeois bureaucratic state apparatus remains intact."

Lenin is unequivocally assertive. But Dr Das Gupta has yet to pierce the veil of probabilities, possibilities, ifs and buts. Of course, he, too, is unequivocal—in respect of the people's backward political consciousness. The entire theme of the argument put forward by him has already been made stale by CPI(M) leaders. But while the latter took a bird's eye view of the Naxalbari movement, Dr Das Gupta has tried to probe it with the penetrating eyes of an eagle. Since he is a 'trained' Marxist, an associate of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, he is fully aware that the main trend in the current world is revolution and the last citadel of fast decaying imperialism is the vast expanse of the 'developing countries' in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Also within his full realisation is the fact that up to a great extent parliamentary fight can arrest the growth of real revolutionary battle and in that case moribund imperialism will not have to run the risk of suppressing a revolutionary battle by coercive measures and can have some respite.

But when parliamentary or constitutional illusions are being torn to pieces by the impact of stern objective laws of history, as has somewhat been seen by Dr Das Gupta himself, a reinforcement is necessary to enliven the illusion. Immature or indiscreet action in the name of revolution can very well provide this.

Dr Das Gupta's treatment of the Naxalbari movement, if examined closely, fails to make out anything else. Naturally, therefore, it could not but give rise to arbitrary, erroneous and self-contradictory premises and propositions. That of course does not matter. What matters to him is to come to a positive conclusion and that is why even after pointing out the vital differences between the Chinese path of revolution and the CPI(ML) led movement, he does not hesitate to take the latter for a prototype of the former and endeavours hard to prove the untenability of the Chinese path in India. What led him to argue so much on this score is that the main thing in the Chinese path is to make a revolution under the leadership of the working class making agrarian revolution its main axis and to bring about such a revolution, seizure of political power through armed struggle is an indispensable element. If one fails to do away with this main content of the Chinese path one is sure to be unsuccessful in establishing the necessity of pursuing the parliamentary path which Dr Das Gupta wants to establish at least for some more years to come. But genuine Marxists, not trained in London, know it very well that as revisionism often leads to left adventurism, the latter in turn almost invariably gives rise to revisionism and right-opportunism of all hues which always banks on "people's backwardness". The sole purpose of Dr Biplab Das Gupta's book has thus been exposed before the Marxist revolutionaries.

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CURRENT BOOK DEPOT,

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Laldighir Din-Ratri

BY A DRAMA CRITIC

ANTIGONE

IF ever there was a one-man show in which the principal actor overshadowed all the others and won over the audience by dint of sheer exuberance, it was Bhanu Banerjee in Abhiroop's 'Laldighir Din-Ratri' staged at the Academy on April 10. Most of us in Calcutta today have made Binoy-Badal-Dinesh Bagh (formerly Dalhousie Square) the hub of our lives and even those who exist on its periphery draw sustenance from it. Here we are face to face with life in the raw—life on the dreary pavements, life centred round a panshop and a tea stall, full of ups and downs, mercurial changes of fortune, the eternal, endless rhythm of men in quest of wealth, success, and fleeting happiness.

Kali Banerjee is a permanent fixture on the GPO steps—eking out an untrammelled existence as a panwallah and known to all the hawkers and customers who throng the area and find in him a source of solace and goodwill. He is joined by a young man, Madan, desperately in need of a job who decides to pitch in with him and become his assistant. The story begins at this point and gives us an insight into the lives of the miscellaneous characters who form an inseparable part of the B.B.D. Bagh landscape. We have a motley collection—Patel, the fiery-tempered panwali who left her husband in a huff to seek her fortune in fresh pastures and ended up literally on the streets; Singh, the unscrupulous, loud-mouthed tea stall owner cum money-lender, who had most of the hawkers in the area under his thumb; the long-haired, one-man revolutionary who lost his sense of balance when he was deliberately dismissed as leader of a strike in a factory when all the other workers were reinstated; Bhabesh Babu, the very prim and utterly self-conscious officer in a mercantile firm secretly longing to don the mantle of a professor in distant realms; Atish Babu, the lascivious businessman reeking of money and out for his Saturday night kicks

and so on. A fair cross-section of people who gravitate towards B.B.D. Bagh at all hours. The evening, however, belonged to Bhanu Banerjee as Kali the panwallah. An epitome of compassion and generosity but armed with an abrasive tongue, he swore, shouted, leaped, pontificated, recited home truths and stole the show successfully—a miniature Siraj-ud-daullah whose role he so greatly admired. Patal came off next best with her hard business sense and oodles of course which she displayed to great effect when confronted with the bullying tactics of Singhji and the Vaisnava pimp who was a bustee landlord and trafficked in sex. Most of the other characters who drifted in and out of the stage suffered from a surfeit of self-consciousness and amateurishness which made their words and movements very mechanical and stilted. Most of them did not seem to know when to enter and were seen peeping from the wings. The prompting was loud and insistent.

The typical setting comprising the unmistakable pillars and steps of the GPO and the small pan shop hanging out of a window and equipped with all the authentic accessories was realistically achieved and the subtle light effects showing the change from dawn to dusk were visually satisfying.

It was a good idea to take a hard and yet compassionate look at B.B.D. Bagh round which the ebb and flow of life continues from the time of job Charnock. In the end the veteran panwallah Kali loses all his assistants and friends, all of whom decide to start from where they left off and go back to their past lives. He helps to set them up all around him and then one fine day finds that each one of them wants to succeed in some other sphere and the final farewell scene is tinged with nostalgia, a certain wistful sadness and a touching magnanimity of spirit on Kali's part—now left alone to sell his pan and watch the world go by.

The play *Antigone* received a good airing in the hands of Nandikar at the Academy of Fine Arts on April 19. The stage decoration had a living quality about it, specially the entrance into the palace. The play begins with the narrator giving us the contours of the story and gradually leading us on to it. Right at the beginning we see Antigone in a stubborn mood, spoiling for a fight and quite prepared to defy Creon's fiat and go out in the early hours of the morning to bury the body of her dead brother Poly-nices. Her entire being is geared to this act of defiance and at times one could discern a streak of near-insanity in her cool and calculated resolve to defy the king's strictures. One of the most moving scenes centred round the dialogue between Creon and Antigone when the king, determined to save the life of a wilful and seemingly pig-headed young girl, attempts to reason with her and she fights back by exposing mercilessly the cynical opportunism, hypocrisy and cowardice that were a part of his mental make-up. Two equally justified attitudes oppose each other and both of them are charged with high-minded passion. Creon's unbending sense of kingship and fairplay clashed with Antigone's espousal of the rights of an individual and sense of devotion. Yet there were times when Creon seemed to thaw a little and almost acquire the complexion of a humanist—anxious to preserve the status quo without trig-

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gering off any bloodshed and reprisals and keep Antigone intact at any cost for his son Haemon whom she loved. All his softness and studied calm were, however, of no avail; Antigone was like a tornado whose direction could not be altered and she drove him to pronounce the death sentence upon her.

Keya Chakravarty gave a scintillating performance as the possessed Antigone and kept up the tempo of her fury although she was capable of softer emotions in the presence of her old maid who loved her dearly. At times her body became more eloquent than her words—and with suppleness of limbs she flung herself from one emotion to another. Rudraprasad Sen Gupta as Creon looked every inch his part—grim self-centred, ruthless and strongly imbued with an exaggerated sense of his own importance but ready to shed the mask of austerity and display compassion when confronted with the sight of a headstrong young girl in the throes of self-destruction. The king's role was ably performed and an occasional fumbling with the lines was perhaps a minor lapse which did not interfere with our enjoyment. Ismene was cut out as an insignificant and mediocre character and somehow wasn't meant to attract attention. The other minor characters who were physically present and performed their allotted parts creditably were Haemon, Creon's son, and the three guards who caught Antigone in the act of burying her brother's body and the loving old maid.

Calcutta Painters

SANDIP SARKAR

AN exhibition of paintings, drawings, sculptures and graphics of the Calcutta Painters was on view at the Birla Academy from April 8 to 20, 1975. This time there were lithographs of Shakti Burman who now lives in Paris. Artists of the group differ from each other in their attitude to art and life and naturally in execution. There was, as it were, two fundamentally different schools. One could be called decorative and the other serious. Bimal Das-

gupta thinks of painting as wall decoration essentially. Non-figurative in approach, his paintings remind of underwater marine life. The use of primary and secondary colours creates pleasing non-figurative forms which could enliven an affluent drawing room. Dhiraj Choudhury's 'Decorative Designs', a set of four paintings, have squares with scenes from life stylised. The whole canvas gives the effect of a serial strip of film. The parts do not build up into one whole. Individual areas might be interesting and could have been separate paintings, but the disjointedness does not help. Bright flat colours are used and give a fluorescent effect and from a distance look like decorative design. Niren Sengupta's collages are smooth and well arranged but the magazine cuttings do not lose their identity to become transformed visually, and this is a fault. In the end his collages look like giant-size commercial lay-outs. Prakash Karmakar seems exhausted imagination-wise and should rest before he approaches anything new. Among the outstation painters, Jogen Choudhury's imaginative faces have a haunting quality. As faces they are types that are common in these parts, worn out faces of old men who have been battered and tossed up, living a sort of vegetative existence. There is a smell of decay in their way of looking at things. Here and there a bright hue may appear but they are tucked away in darker tonal variations done now with subdued brushwork and then with real violence. At the very bottom he is experimenting in oval shapes.

Sankar Guha tries to forget all intellectual pretensions, so he said to this reviewer, and be spontaneous. His brushwork is excellent with a kind of subdued luminosity and his use of colours, as harmonised polyphony, tries to give the figures a secondary importance. The tussle between content and style creates a gap because he tries to prove that he is not an intellectual. Yet in a sensitive way Shankar's achievement is not mean. The men either lying down, or fishermen beside the sea, with a fish as a sort of primitive marine symbol create a prehistoric atmosphere. Subhaprasanna shows signs of marked

improvement. Previously his colours were stains rather than pigments but his brief visit to Paris has given him an insight into the use of oil. The world of flowers and butterflies which fall and wither away is still with Subha, but his otherworldly philosophy has a little more life. He is essentially an imagist and tries to use imagery with precision and exactness. A clock and a skull of bull may be juxtaposed to create a feeling about fleeting nature and timelessness. A falling leaf in a storm creates a mood that is rather poetic. Even the red 'alta' put on the feet of a dead body might frighten. As his attitude to life has become more robust his colours have become more subtle. A blue, or yellow or green may have tonal modulation which shows a passion. Dilip Kundu seems to be on the verge of new discovery. The maturity in 'Wounded Bird' and 'Portrait' has something that is passionate, especially the pictorial integrity of his texture takes us into deeper regions of oneself and one experiences an uncanny feeling.

Bipin Goswami convinces that he is one of the best practising sculptors of the city. His modelling and the serenity of his figures are classical, but he distorts and elongates with a subtlety and creates a synthesis of form and volume. Particularly his 'Fallen Warrior' and 'Seated Warrior' have something which attempt a certain humour. On the other hand the woman drying her long hair has massiveness.

Rabin Mondol's drawings are full of passionate intensity and have archetypal undercurrents and his balancing of the darkness of his lines with space outside is visual poetry of the first order.

Provash Sen's "Couple" of male and female figures lying side by side is very competent. The texture of the body is tactile and sensuous. Particularly the male figure is relaxed.

Sakti Burman's lithographs speak of a technical excellence that graphic artists lack here. The use of several colours is just out of the world. Although one must say that his world of fable is rather removed from ours, it is poetic enough to evoke certain sensations.

Bijan Choudhury's 'Archer' has a

quality of epic where he pictures struggle. The vigour of his structure and linear contour, the closed eyes of the women, the nude body falling headlong have a quality of mural. The colours are subdued and grim. In another painting a man is shown with his past which is rural, and his present which is urban, and this cuts him up into two parts. Yet he stores the moon in his heart. On the other hand the man about to commit suicide meditates about himself and we only see the reflection in the water. In these last two Bijan uses gouache with subtlety.

On the whole this has been quite an impressive exhibition.

Exhibition of WBYAF

An exhibition of drawings and graphics of West Bengal Young Artists' Federation was on view at the Academy of Fine Arts, April 4 to 10. On the whole it seemed that the artists were all going round in circles, exhausted for the most part and therefore in a very uncreative mood. Everyone repeated himself and nobody broke any new grounds.

Prithwis Sikdar's drawings are very smart and have some resemblance to collage. He studies a head or parts of the head: the ear or nose may be studied in great detail. The parts are not assembled but left lying about in an interesting fashion. There are watches, flowers and arrows which are used as symbols. Samir Ghosh's simple studies of cats remind of children's book illustration. These city cats have something very sinister about them. Anil Sen's descending men done in pencil has gracefulness and beautiful shading; particularly interesting is his sculptural drawing. Bipul Guha's drawings are rather action-painting oriented but he has no sense of inner order of a composition. Simali Barun attempts bold strokes, distortion and foreshortening with a gusto almost in a Nikhil Biswas fashion but as he is never genuinely inspired and lacks Nikhil's draughtsmanship, he never convinces. Prithwis Sen's drawings smell of Art School although there are indications that he works very hard. He studies skulls, often broken, over which foliage creeps. Arun Paul

invokes a Buddha or a Christ with underfed children's faces or undernourished men. He is intense in his statements but somehow reminds of Oxfam ads. He is particularly convincing in his drawing of drought-affected barren fields with a superimposed child's face. Asit Mandal tries to do too much in too little space. He has skills of sorts but his imagery and technique are too Ganesh Pynesque to be convincing. Kajal Dasgupta marks time in his own little world of men and women who remind one of the show world and the oldest profession. He has lucid lines but is rather repetitive. Paritosh Das tries to be simple and direct, using folk stylisation and imagery and a quaint mythical lore. Tapan Kumar Biswas' drawing seemed to have improved. His headless hanging men in a cave with a dog and a sadhu is almost convincing but not quite. Mrinmoy Mukerjee's warrior on elephant's back in a mountainous region is well executed.

There was an element of futile exercise in the exhibition. Everyone wanted to relate his experience of the sordid world and be introspective in a way. There was a lot of fantasy but no freshness in the imagery used or the composition employed. The young artists are having too many shows a year without preparation or introspection. It would be better if they stopped exhibiting for a year and two and worked hard on their craft every day.

Refreshing

..An exhibition of paintings by Santwana Kumar Goswami in the Academy was rather refreshing, especially after the WBYAF debacle. Goswami was in Rajasthan for a long period and studied folk culture, so there is nothing second hand. Particularly sensuous was his tempera which does not have anything stale. There was a vivid freshness in his colours used in masses. Particularly competent were his sensitive elephant done in red, and butterfly, dog and peacock. The fluidity of lines in his woodcuts, their rare sense of composition and conviction of his imagination force the viewer to admit that he is experiencing some new visual reality.

Letter

The Murder of Mahalanobis

I appreciate the attention given by several commentators (February 22 and March 8) to my article entitled "The Murder of Mahalanobis" (February 1).

Dr J. Roy, Programme Director of the symposium under review, has presented some facts. For instance, the symposium was organised in memory of Mahalanobis, a large number of papers were presented, a large number of non-Indians participated, honours were conferred on distinguished scientists, etc. I do not dispute the facts, but I do not see how they alone, necessarily, lead to Dr Roy's conclusion that the symposium was "consistent with the Mahalanobis philosophy of statistics as a key technology".

Dr Ashok Rudra (March 8), is free to contest my contention that Mahalanobis's concept of statistics as a key technology was not reflected in the symposium, but saying that my article merely reflected the petty squabbles within the ISI, is distortion of facts. Dr Rudra points out that my article "has interest only for a tiny section of that privileged group of professional people who,, earn a good living at the cost of the masses. . . . (etc.)", but forgets to mention that he belongs to the same group himself. Incidentally, are Dr Rudra's articles in *Frontier*, *EPW* and elsewhere, read and appreciated by a very different group, the masses, for instance?

Sarbasree C. R. Singh, P. C. L. Rao and J. B. Chetty have very rightly voiced the ISI workers' and students' resentment against the presence of policemen on the campus during the symposium. But let me raise a very uncomfortable question in this context: What has the ISI's Left Establishment done about this detestable incident? A couple of years ago, when a policeman, chasing a casual worker against whom they had specific charges, entered the campus, the Left Establishment organised a 48-hour cease-work with lightning speed. What have they done this time? Where has all their courage gone?

All the commentators seem to have-

missed one of the basic points that I wanted to make: that, in India today, science has been reduced to a purposeless, directionless, incoherent, farcical impotent lot, far removed from the lives of the common man, for whom some of them keep shedding tears from their high seats of social eminence. To my mind, Mahalanobis symbolised early efforts, in a colonial society, to place science in a wide perspective, instilled with rationality and value judgment.

Whether I, or Dr Rudra, or that tiny group of *Frontier* readers who might have appreciated my article, are living comfortably at the expense of the masses is irrelevant in this context. It is more relevant to ask ourselves whether we, the indisputably privileged professionals, are contributing our bit to building a more rationally-oriented society, within our very limited capacity, in our immediate sphere of activity, in course of our everyday life. Let

us be honest, rational, reasonably upright individuals, responsive to the problems of the man around the corner, and try to use our professional ability in a meaningful manner, rather than making revolution, for the masses, in the columns of *Frontier*. The masses will take care of themselves, even without our paternalistic pat on the shoulder.

Anamik Basab,
Calcutta

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APPEAL FOR FUNDS

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

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