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COPS IN RAGE

IT is perhaps unnecessary to conceive of a CIA hand behind last week's mini-mutiny in Calcutta. Mr Promode Das Gupta knows well enough that there are many forces in West Bengal, and of course in the rest of the country, which need neither inspiration nor help from any external agency to conspire against the United Front Government. And for once talk of a conspiracy did not seem irrelevant. Even a section of the "democratic" Press reported that Mr Subodh Datta, of Durgapur notoriety, was present at a meeting of the mutinous policemen at Anderson House, that the West Bengal Congress party itself had sent a wreath for the policeman killed at Basanti, that a female MLA took the initiative in trying to get Mr Jyoti Basu out of his room to face the violent demonstrators. A great deal more seems suspicious, and a thorough enquiry will certainly reveal the details of plotting and preparation. Even the current investigation into the "administrative failure" may show highly interesting ramifications of the conspiracy. But the findings will surprise few with any idea of the extent of reactionary desperation since the mid-term elections.

It would be useful to expose the undercurrents of intrigue, but exposure is the least of the UF Government's tasks. The dark designs are already clear to the public, at least in their general outline. So it is already time for the Government to act—with full assurance of public support. Mr Jyoti Basu has indicated that a full-fledged commission may be appointed to look into all aspects of the organization and functioning of the police force. There is nothing wrong with the idea, nor is there any doubt that the examination will lead to recommendations for some changes. But action should not wait until this exercise is over. Enough is already known about the force to provide the basis for a major overhaul.

By last weekend several junior members of the force had been dismissed for direct involvement in the sordid drama in Assembly House. But by sacking a few constables or one or two officers one does not attack even the fringe of the problem. To remove the core of mischief within the force, the measures will have to be much more sustained and far-reaching. There need be no witch-hunt, no anti-McCarthyite McCarthyism. But there should be no hesitation in weeding out all elements whose loyalty to the present Government is less than total because of

political prejudice or worse. Policemen, like any other section of the people, may have legitimate grievances. But the Government simply cannot afford to keep in the force people who would do anything to see a return of the days when repression was openly and visibly synonymous with the rule of law and corruption with freedom of competition.

The ballyhoo about the rape of democracy of which the police attack on the Assembly House is supposed to be the first portent, is unreal. The fact is, we have been here before. If democracy means guarding the interests of the people, the police as a whole have been undemocratic for a pretty long time. The savage June attack on a Durgapur College should have been an eye-opener to the Ministry. We are fortunate that the Home Minister, who was the main target of the policemen run berserk and who, unlike most of the panicky MLAs, tackled the situation with admirable nerve, did not this time issue a press note saying that the MLAs were so rowdy that the police had to act in self-defence from outside the Assembly. And it will not do to minimise the calculated Assembly madness of the police by blaming a section of them alone. For the police as a whole are part of the state machinery of repression of the common people. MLAs, just because they are elected, should not think that an attack on them is a singular, sinister case of assault on democracy. The police who have always been indulging in these attacks can, when it suits them, enter the Assembly House or High Court to wreck the constitution from within in their own way. It is only a mobilised people—without the rowdies who have entered every party—that can meet the challenge.

IJMA Blackmail

The Indian Jute Mills Association is clearly bent upon playing a nefarious game of blackmail. The mill-owning interests must have reached their private conclusion that they

have no future in jute processing : with emerging competition from a vastly more efficient Pakistani industry—and from synthetic and paper—one has to be alert and willing to innovate if one wants to maintain one's past position. This is however too much to expect of the tycoons, who are swayed more by the thought of the lush and easy profits which can be made in the protected domestic market for light consumer goods and chemicals. The daily loss of Rs 1 crore does not seem to worry the IJMA the least ; the demand for abolition of export and excise duties is just a ploy for denying the workers the more than justified wage increase. The impact of any reduction or wholesale abolition of these duties on the earnings of the mills could be only with a time-lag ; the linking of the two issues is therefore altogether specious. The question of the regularisation of employment for the so-called 'casual labour' too can have no conceivable relationship to the adjustment of the duties ; such casual employment was a device which had been perfected by the IJMA to cheat about 80,000 workers of certain amenities and dues which accrue to labour in all modern democratic societies.

Must the Government give in to the blackmailers ? It is obvious that the tycoons could not care less what happens to the jute growers and to the labourers—or to the overall foreign exchange earnings of the country. The safeguarding of their margin of profit is the principal—is perhaps even the only—consideration with them. That being the case, one could ask whether this is an ideal industry to be taken over by the State straightaway. The book value of the capital assets of this industry—known for its obsolete equipment which the IJMA members have failed to replace with modern machinery, despite generous State assistance—would not amount to a formidable figure, and compensation that has to be paid in foreign exchange would not be more than marginal. There is no profound technology in jute processing either. A take-over by the State could assure

simultaneously a fair price to the large community of small holders who produce the fibre and a higher level of wages for the mill labour. It could also provide for a more satisfactory integration of the government's financial and trade policies, promoting the cause of both additional foreign exchange earnings and extra fiscal receipts.

The IJMA has no stakes, and can watch the prospects of jute growing and processing dwindle with cynical poise. But the Government has to move, and move fast : it cannot possibly permit 200,000 industrial workers to go without jobs, nor can it afford a crash in raw jute prices even as the season is just starting. A bumper crop of the fibre is being expected for this year, and the total output may even exceed 8.5 million bales. If the strike leads to a sharp fall in purchases, prices might tumble down to levels which were last reached only in the 1930s during the depression. Apart from ruining the cultivation of jute in this country once and for all, such a price crash would bring in its train a sequence of agrarian unrest in eastern States the magnitude of which can scarcely be foreseen at this stage. Coddling the IJMA has made it only more intransigent ; a change in official attitude, both in Calcutta and New Delhi, is now overdue.

Student Victory

Banaras Hindu University has developed into what Daniel Cohn-Bendit called a critical university, maybe, in an imperfect form. Danny considered those universities critical where students forced the Authority to show up its bloody hands. Dr A. C. Joshi, Vice-Chancellor of BHU, fitted the description alright but thanks to his spare-time chairmanship of this conference and that seminar, he was able to maintain all along a revered facade. His 'autonomous' atrocities were given wholehearted support by the former Education Minister, Dr Triguna Sen, who thought Dr Joshi a capable Vice-

Chancellor. Dr Joshi made a hell of the university but the students raised hell within a hell. The Government, ultimately, was forced to appoint an inquiry committee, which, in its recently published report, condemned Dr Joshi and his RSS soul-brothers in embarrassingly certain terms.

Dr Joshi has resigned. But it cannot be said he did it elegantly. Before resigning, he applied for his earned leave, at the expiry of which his resignation would take effect. Money before honour! To be sure he is not banking on any hope of return; his wherewithal has been rather shamelessly exposed. But the RSS, whose champion he was, is now up and doing—conducting a signature campaign against the Gajendragadkar Inquiry Committee, which has recommended the demolition of the RSS building on the campus.

The Government, true to its form, is reluctant to carry into effect other recommendations of the Committee. These envisage reforms, which the Government admits are necessary. But, as Dr V. K. R. V. Rao says, these are "so very comprehensive and of such far-reaching character that they require consideration in depth and detail". How did the Committee, to start with, recommend the reforms? If it overstepped the terms of reference it was given to work within, Dr Rao should say so. If it did not, why does he stall action?

The BHU students, those worth the name, have won their points. No doubt they would not relent till they get back their leaders who were expelled because of their protest against the VC who overlooked arson and rape and cared a fig for education. But it is not yet time for complacency. The struggle of the students cannot but be a long one, given the political situation in the country as a whole.

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A correspondent writes:

When 27 years ago, on August 9, the Congress passed the Quit India resolution in the midst of a world war it had no well thought out plan for a movement to force the British out. The leaders, much to their relief, were rounded up and disturbances broke out. But the men in action lacked sustained guidance, though there were brave groups who made a determined effort to challenge the rulers. The effort was not massive enough to meet the leonine violence of the British and their native henchmen. It became evident that the Congress had banked on the military situation and the spontaneous wrath of the people. One thing about non-violence is that the leaders do not have to go underground but are rested in jail while the people face the violence of the masters. No kid gloves for them.

The Quit India outburst brought many a sensitive Indian face to face with tormenting contradictions. The Bombay resolution had an authentic ring of anti-fascism. The argument was genuine: without a taste of freedom it was not possible to mobilise the Indian masses for a war which was supposed to be waged for freedom and democracy. How could they accept the bona fides of the British? If the British made no gesture, freedom had to be wrested from them.

That was the dilemma, for Marxists. A mass movement at that juncture would have been a serious blow to Soviet Russia and the communist—and therefore, the Indian—cause. The Germans had not yet met their Stalingrad and the Japanese were knocking at the gates. In theory, if the British had been forced to concede the national demand a popular government headed by a man like Nehru could have helped the Allied cause. But there were imponderables: for instance the INA, whose role was in grave doubt despite the popularity of Subhas Bose; all the

evidence then and the parallels elsewhere pointed to the conclusion that it would act at the behest of the Japanese if it ever entered India in the wake of a mass movement against the British. Also, the intentions of some of the top leaders of the Congress were not at all clear. They were not famous for their abhorrence of the Axis powers.

The task of the Communist Party was difficult and open to slanderous interpretation when it was legalised and went all out to support the war effort, though in its own way. But how to make the sullen masses believe that the biggest job of the day was to see that Soviet Russia—and the Allies—came out victorious? Such internationalism does not come in a day. And the course of events that followed did not quite justify the assumption that all the policies followed by the CPI were correct. The blood bath of partition, instead of a united front against the British Raj, still stinks.

Whatever the later judgment of history there is no denying the fact that many Indians who hated the Axis powers were torn by a dichotomy in their responses to the course of the war. A German victory anywhere in Russia depressed them no end, but a British debacle in the Far East was welcome despite the threat it posed to India. Nationalism thus contended with the wider ideological approval of the anti-fascist war. Was there, therefore, a justification for a national liberation movement at that critical juncture? No one knows. But at the same time it should be noted that the anti-fascist ardour was not fake. The anti-fascists who were in a minority in the country were responsible for some fine developments in poetry, fiction and drama—a brief summer. Even Rabindranath, who was critical of the Soviet action against Finland, wrote some of his stark, bare and most moving poems before he died a year ahead of the

Quit India movement, haunted by anxiety about the outcome of the Russo-German war.

These are contradictions, no doubt. Perhaps at the root of it all is the fact that we have always reacted to events abroad, we have never been actors and occupied a part of the stage. We are auditorium people, waiting for the message to come from somewhere.

Textile Tariff

The high-pitched protest by the left opposition in Parliament against the recent decision of the British Board of Trade to drop the quota system from 1972 and instead impose a 15 per cent tariff duty on cotton textile imports from Commonwealth countries betrays a lack of knowledge of the trend of self-defence in the developed world. Notwithstanding the UNCTAD-II recommendations of a non-reciprocal, non-discriminatory system of preference in favour of developing countries, and of encouraging the export of manufactures from them, the developed world, including Russia, has been conducting foreign trade in a fashion which amounts to sacrificing the Third World at the altar of the former's self-interest. The British Government has allowed itself to be convinced that the Lancashire textile industry—which the *Economist* calls the "world's oldest infant industry"—can streamline its production if it is enabled to meet some more of its home demand. But the point is, the Textile Council recommendation only affects the Commonwealth countries. The European Free Trade Association countries will continue to enjoy tariff free entry of their cotton goods. If the industry in the Commonwealth countries is efficient to the extent of absorbing the new levy or their Governments give a subsidy

to maintain the level of exports, then competition in the U.K. market will become fierce. In that case, the consumers will stand to lose from the scrapping of the quota system. The next likely move by Lancashire will be for quantitative restrictions on individual products. And the Board of Trade may again give in for the great cause of protecting the home industry. So what is there "historic" about the Ottawa agreement of 1932, which is said to have strengthened the economic relations of the Commonwealth countries? If the U.K. has so far been liberal about cotton textile imports it is because of her problem ridden industry. Lancashire's share in the recent rise in world textile consumption has been insignificant, and the country relies on imports to the extent of 53 per cent of its domestic consumption. Although during 1959-68, the U.K.'s imports rose by 47 per cent, India had restrained her share to merely 15 per cent on the basis of a voluntary inter-industry agreement. Moreover, India has often failed to reach the quota level. It is only in the quota year 1967-68 that India's exports at 204.19 million square yards exceeded the quota of 198.19 million square yards. Export booking in the first six months of the current year is much short of the amount booked in the corresponding period of the previous year. India which sends about a third of her cloth and yarn to the U.K. stands to suffer most from the proposed levy. She could not find an alternative market in Africa which has developed capacity for coarse and medium varieties of cloth and relies on imports for better quality goods. The USA and the European Economic Community have limited their intake from developing countries and Japan to 10 per cent of their consumption. The EEC Commission is also considering the idea of further concentration in the cotton textile industry. In spite of Mr Crosland's palliative that loss in exports would be compensated by extra aid, India could well expect further restrictive measures once Britain is admitted to ECM.

Calcutta Diary

CHARAN GUPTA

IT would surely be presumptuous on my part to proffer advice to Mr Jyoti Basu; I would not even attempt to. That Thursday afternoon in the Assembly Chamber, when several heroes of the United Front were exemplifying the adage that escape was the better part of valour, Mr Basu kept his head and showed that extra measure of courage which is expected of a leader of the masses. But, despite the spate of disciplinary measures which have followed, it is simply not possible to consider the affair as of no further consequence—or not to regard it as the result of a certain process of causality. Despite what some party bosses might think, this journal is no enemy of the United Front. If we on occasion sound caustic in our comments on some particular activities of the Front, it is because we hold the honest conviction that such causticity in the larger run would serve the cause, and we don't mind if you spell the latter with a capital C. I-shall-be-drowned-and-nobody-will-save-me type of fatalism bodes ill for the Front; if we often betray an impatience in our criticisms, it is because we want to warn the Front away from such puerile manifestations of the death-wish.

* *

So here I go. The question to ask is, how come sections of the police force dared to indulge in the sort of things they did last week? They dared to do these things because, at the back of their mind, they held the belief that they could get away with it all. The theory of a Congress led reactionary conspiracy against the United Front is good, as far as it goes, to sway the emotions of the Maidan crowd; but there is not much intelligent mileage to be got out of it. I will not rule out the possibility of minor machinations on the part of x, y or z, but the Congress in this State as of this moment is in

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such poor shape organisationally that it could hardly be the focal point of a grand counter-attack against the Front. The parallel theory of the Central Intelligence Agency's leading the conspiracy will not wash either: the CIA is neither as all-pervasive nor as supra-efficient as is made out in the horror stories doled out by the second rung of UF leaders. No, if the elements of the police force could accumulate this much of cheek, it is because of the Front's own folly. Mr Jyoti Basu is reaping what he has himself sown, ably assisted by other leaders.

One would detect, from the very beginning, a streak of anti-Marxism in the Front's attitude toward any suggested reorganisation of the State's bureaucracy and police. The assumption has been that senior civil servants and police officials have no class or political alignments; since they are hirelings of the State, they will obey whatever the Ministers will order them to do. It followed from this proposition that no changes in personnel are called for in the strategic posts in the police or civil service hierarchy on the assumption of power by the United Front; those who had served the Congress faithfully and well would serve the communists too equally and well. This, it will be remembered, was also the theory which led Jawaharlal Nehru to hand over the administration of the country following independence straightaway to the colonials of the Indian Civil Service. That was in 1947; here, in 1969, Mr Jyoti Basu followed suit. I know the instance of the Inspector-General of Police having been compulsorily retired will be hurled at my face—and the instance of the suspension of a Deputy Superintendent of Police. But, in both these cases, the motivation, I assert, was subjective, and not in pursuance of any basic desire to overhaul the apparatus. Nor do I consider the plea that since the senior bureaucrats are members of all-India services, the State Government could do little to discipline them, terribly plausible. Even within the so-called four corners

of the service rules, the scope exists for reproofing or punishing wayward civil servants and police officers, for reorganizing the administration, and for effecting change in the key personnel. The United Front till now has done nothing of the sort, because its leadership's beliefs are—or at least have been—all to the contrary.

* *

The result has been the chaos of permissiveness. The old gang has remained, both in the administration and the upper echelons of the police. The fear of God has been eliminated. Never mind whether a particular individual has a shady record, never mind whether his bona fides have been severely commented upon by the Vigilance Commission, never mind whether his evil acts during the long Congress regime are public knowledge, he has been allowed to stay on in the cushy, responsible position he was holding. Ministers have been propitiated through flattery and gimmickry. Gradually—or perhaps not gradually, altogether quickly—the news has spread that, contrary to earlier apprehension, even the communist Ministers are manageable; provided you know the right technique of propitiating them, you can get away with thievery, fornication, murder and what not. For confirmation of this knowledge, the police officials and bureaucrats initially carried out experiments on a small scale: flouting of orders here and there, cutting corners where such demeanour is definitely not in order. They have discovered that the Ministers indeed have not reacted. With the ushering in of the United Front, it is indeed the permissive society—anything goes. There is a Tagore song with the rather charming refrain: "We are all sovereign in this kingdom of ours". Under the United Front this concept of unlimited sovereignty has been extended to apply to each and all: as much to the most corrupt civil servant, as to the high police official with the worst possible reputation.

* *

Let me quote a stray example. The press recently mentioned the details of a sordid drunken brawl between a top administrative official and an equally highly placed police officer. It was an unsavoury story, there was explicit mention of names in the newspapers; no denials have been forthcoming, no libel suits have been filed either, which establishes the general probity of the story. Both the persons involved in the episode are of long-standing notoriety: the civil servant has been alleged to be corrupt umpteen number of times, the zest with which the police officer has in the past served the Congress in suppressing popular agitations is also generally known. And yet, they remain where they are: even following their disgusting public behaviour, no proceedings are drawn up; in the case of at least one of them, the coming of the United Front has resulted in a certain advance in his career. Mr Jyoti Basu will perhaps retort that it is little use taking disciplinary action against such men since whatever concrete evidence there is of, for instance, the corruption, will fall short of what is needed to satisfy the courts. But I would have thought that, for a Marxist, what should have swayed is the other, much bigger, criterion: the code of public morality.

Anyway, since the United Front has thought otherwise, there has been, since March, *purna swaraj* for the top echelon of the police and the civil service in this State. But it is difficult to have a selective application of the concept of permissiveness. If murder and mayhem and insolence are to be permitted, you cannot honestly say that they are to be permitted only for the top brass. If the Commissioner of Police can get away with cheekiness, an ordinary police constable can legitimately conclude that he too can get away with it: in any kind of democracy it would be grossly unfair to tick him off without at the same time ticking off the former. There can be no question that, whether

imaginary or real, the junior policemen who constituted that procession from Bhabani Bhavan, had some pent-up grievances; in the altered political circumstances, they had to bear the brunt of the accumulated wrath of the people for the barbarities committed by the police in the past. They could have justifiably found it bizarre that while they are at the receiving end of mass fury, their seniors—who were the ones who had led them, during the Congress heyday, in the anti-people orgies—are having a cushy time with the Ministers. If these senior officers could bully the United Front, why not they? Once this syllogism gained ground, the rest followed.

The Front is now flexing the muscles after the event. But I would still insert this warning sideways: by merely dismissing a few members of the junior constabulary and some middle-rank police officers, no worthwhile gains would be achieved; the state of sullen discontent among the rank and file of the police would only be aggravated thereby. It is necessary to begin at the beginning, by striking out men at the very top of the police hierarchy, the ones who have been instrumental in fomenting the notion that the police are a sovereign force, and Ministers may come and Ministers may go, they go on forever. If Mr Jyoti Basu is not prepared to attack the concept of immortality of the police bosses even now, the culpability for the bigger troubles in the not too distant future would devolve entirely on him. Men, especially at the top of a functioning bureaucracy, do matter: their

philosophy of life, their attitude to social processes, their particular reflexes in moments of stress are basic to their decision-making. Till so long as the United Front does not learn this lesson, it has not learnt anything. I have just heard a rumour that the Front has almost decided to instal as chairman of the board of the by-now famous Saxby Farmer a well-known former Congress toady, who in the olden days was a British toady. I give up.

* * *

If I was not feeling this despondent, I would perhaps have concluded by admonishing the Front about another type of permissiveness. How long is the fiction going to be practised that all the twelve-and-odd parties in the Front are equal—and are to be accorded the same order of permissiveness? The United Nations principle of one-country-one-vote has rendered that organisation into an old aunt's debating forum; a worse fate will overtake the Front if the principle is persisted with here with such an abundance of irresponsibility. Much of last week's trouble could be causally linked to certain gross acts of misadventure on the part of one particular constituent of the Front, which furthered neither the cause of revolution nor that of orderly seizure of land. Having entered the Government the CPI(M) has to assert itself as leader of the Front and enforce a centralised direction on the movement for the occupation of illegally held land. Of course, as it tries to assert its leadership, howls will emanate from several constituents of the Front, but there is no doctrine anywhere on earth, revolutionary or otherwise, which says that a minority view is superior to that held by the majority. It is time to liquidate the blackmail of these minor groups in the Front. After all, there are not too many places where these groups can go to for sulking—unless, of course, they decide to gang up with the Congress or the dismissed policemen.

View from Delhi

Tricky Dicky

FROM A POLITICAL
CORRESPONDENT

FOR all the gloss official New Delhi has been putting on Mr Richard Nixon's flashy visit (we thought for a moment that the United States Embassy had taken the Government of India on a day's lease!), there is only confusion and a sense of bewilderment about what the United States policy in Asia is going to be like. The policy is yet to crystallise and nothing has been spelt out yet. But it is certain that the United States does not look at Asia in terms of the familiar old digits any more. Knowledge of this seems to have unnerved New Delhi because in the past it has been playing the dangerous super-Power game of "containing" China too long and too willingly.

The Nixon administration has three widely discussed options before it. It could continue its military role in Asia and draw some more countries into the vortex of the anti-China game and keep up the hostile pressure on China. Or it could attempt a detente with China and build a triangular equation with the Soviet Union and China and bring about a new balance and gradually disengage itself militarily from Asia. But this is a proposition which neither the Soviet Union nor India would welcome because it would mean recognising China as an Asian super-Power. Or, the United States could come to an arrangement with the Soviet Union whereby the latter would do the policing in the region and the two can exercise their hegemony jointly.

There are conflicting trends at work. On the eve of his current tour Mr Nixon announced lifting certain embargoes on China. U.S. citizens, who in the past had to declare whenever they returned home that they were not bringing any

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goods of Chinese origin, now can bring a hundred dollars worth of Chinese goods. Secondly, certain categories of U.S. citizens can go to China without prior permission from their Government. Open Soviet warnings and pressure against Rumania coinciding with the U.S. President's visit to Bucharest indicate Soviet displeasure at the stray signs of American rapprochement with China.

There is a parallel development here. India has been trying to annotate and paraphrase for Mr Nixon's aides the Brezhnev plan for collective security in Asia as something very innocuous, without any military overtones. But then, the United States is likely to sell a similar plan, ostensibly without military overtones, for similar collective security on the basis of economic and cultural cooperation. There is a strange convergence of United States and Soviet interests here.

Perhaps the only achievement New

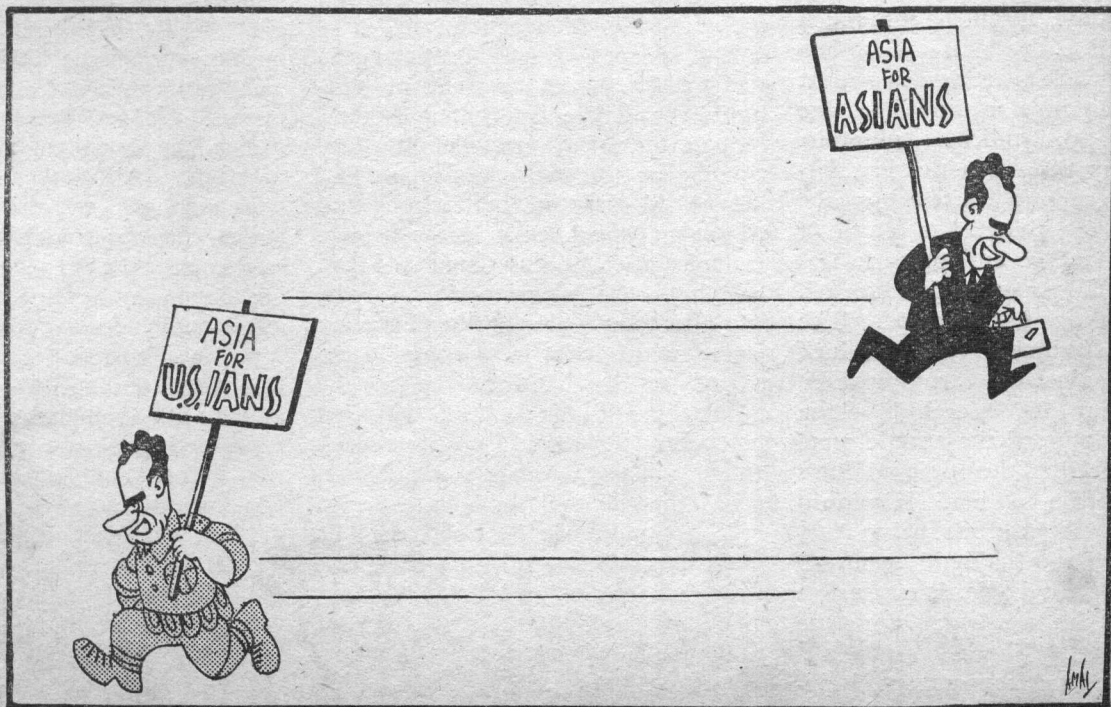
Delhi can claim now is that it has talked Mr Nixon into continuing the embargo on arms sales to Pakistan for a few more months. (Until October, according to New Delhi sources). The United States might will continue the embargo permanently and leave the hardware trade exclusively to the Soviet Union and dump economic aid on both India and Pakistan to release funds for buying Soviet arms. The United States clamped the embargo on both the countries after the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war but the Soviet Union stepped in to start an arms race in the sub-continent. This had tacit United States approval.

The U.S. assessment is that the Soviet Union is likely to draw or implicate Pakistan and India into its own conflict with China. United States effort, one is assured, is to prevent this, though it is not known how it is going to prevent it. Nixon seems to give top priority to the Indo-Pakistani problem because the U.S. reading is that the relations between

the two countries will deteriorate shortly. But Nixon is not for a U.S. role towards an Indo-Pakistani settlement. At least India is against any third party role now (a lesson learnt after the Tashkent euphoria?) and wants only a bilateral approach, excluding both the Soviet Union and the United States. A shift in Pakistan's position is also evident. In the past, Pakistan had considered Kashmir the most important and the most outstanding dispute, solution of which was a pre-condition to solution of lesser problems. But now it has bracketed the Ganga waters dispute with the Kashmir dispute.

There is little chance of a Indo-Pakistani accord on either of these two issues and the tension in the sub-continent will continue. The United States expects a deterioration in Sino-Soviet relations in the near future and this is a complicating factor which any new American policy for Asia would have to take into account.

The Indian side raised the impli-



cations of a major nuclear power like China attacking a non-nuclear power like India and the United States side showed signs of interest in helping India if it were to happen. All this showed a certain confusion on the Indian side and an equal lack of clarity on the U.S. side because its new Asian policy is still under formulation. Mr Dinesh Singh is leading an Indian team for the Indo-U.S. talks in Washington in October and it is hoped that the United States will not revise its decision on arms sales to Pakistan before that.

The Syndicate

The Syndicate has been lying low, in its anxiety to ensure Mr Sanjiva Reddy's victory in the Presidential contest but it looks worried now about the possibility of sabotage by Mrs Indira Gandhi's followers. Two junior Ministers (close to the CPI and the Prime Minister) have been lobbying for Congress votes for Mr V. V. Giri and the Prime Minister feigns ignorance of all this. Mr Sanjiva Reddy continues to maintain his lead over his rivals at the moment but if there is large-scale sabotage in the next 10 days, it will be just touch and go for him.

The Prime Minister's war against the Syndicate now extends to the Press. The pro-Syndicate columnist of a Bombay daily was the first victim. His column attacking the Prime Minister invited the wrath of the powers that be and pressure was brought on the paper to tick him off. The column was discontinued. The kitchen establishment had less luck in its war against the cartoonist who had a gag on Mrs Gandhi's claim that 95 per cent of the people were with her but that the national Press has been hostile to her. His quip about the Indian press being "national" and "nationalised" seems to have sent a shaft home. Pressure was brought on the cartoonist and the editorial bosses. The bosses got cold feet but the Tata management decided to stand up to the challenge.

All India Radio has been overdoing its public relations for the

Prime Minister but the Press Information Bureau (despite its general pro-Moscow susceptibilities) has been a little recalcitrant. So a weekly close to the kitchen was used to attack the PIB. The corps of kitchen correspondents includes those of the Left Establishment who shout with glee at the first attacks on the Press unfriendly to Mrs Gandhi. But they hate to remind themselves that they are part of the game of news manage-

ment to secure moron-like conformism.

Tailpiece: I am trying to save India from going Red. The Communists have already established a foothold in the country and if a progressive economic programme is not followed, they would gain strength. —Mrs Indira Gandhi, quoted in *Spectator*.

August 3, 1969.

Letter from America

Missiles Of Words

ROBI CHAKRAVORTI

MCCLELLAND would like to call America an Achieving Society. Watching American politics circa 1969, I would like to call it a Verbalizing Society. In economic matters, there may be a need for achievement behind American motivation, but political actions are another matter. There they verbalize and change the complexion, but not the content of their action.

This is exactly what is happening on the ABM issue at the time of writing. The Senate is debating Nixon's request for ABM installation. The newspapers and magazines report that the "ABM foes" are quite strong and Nixon may face defeat in the Senate. It looks all so sensational as you switch on the television news in the late afternoon to watch commentators give you the latest head count in the Senate on the ABM line-up.

Nixon will, of course, win, but not before the whole issue is redesignated. The word is compromise. And, what do you think, is going to be the compromise? Funds will be granted to start work on ABM, but there will be "no operational deployment" without future sanction of Congress. The Congress will be happy, Nixon will heave a sigh of relief, those who have watched the ABM debate in the spirit of reading a detective serial will be able to relax—and,

of course, defence industries will get what they wanted and what presumably the Pentagon had promised them long in advance, perhaps even before Nixon dreamt of winning the election.

Look also at the other part of the missile debate, the issue of MIRV which, spelled out, means multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicle. MIRV is a kind of "bus" that enables one missile to carry up to 14 hydrogen bombs aimed at different targets. Defence Secretary Laird had claimed, in course of his shifty arguments for ABM, that the Russians were aiming for a devastating first-strike nuclear capability through a series of MIRVs. Under vigorous questioning by Senator Fulbright, in course of a closed-door hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on June 23, recently made public, Laird hummed and hawed, verbalized and reverbilized, and yet would not admit he was wrong. His final explanation of his original statement is a fascinating example of how leaders in this so-called 'rational' society shift words without shifting position, present facts and yet distort reality, how they, in fact, rationalize but do not reason.

Asked by Fulbright if there is a disagreement between assessment of the U.S. intelligence community

(which, incidentally, is a new word that has recently gained currency) and Laird's on the issue, the Defence Secretary made a neat distinction between "capability" and "intention" and argued that there was no disagreement on the point of Soviet first-strike "capability", and in so far as the Soviet "intention" is concerned, Laird imperiously declared, it is his business and not the intelligence board's to make an appraisal.

While this kind of semantic play was going on in the Senate, the Pentagon had handed the General Electric a contract for the production of 68 MIRV's at an initial estimated cost of \$88 million. Critical Congressmen were surprised to find that they had, in their innocence, approved this spending, apparently not knowing that "Mark 12's" were actually MIRV's. Another instance of a game of words which even Congressmen, supposed to be well-informed, could not sometimes understand, let alone people at large.

Likewise, as Congress debates the ABM issue, the Pentagon has spent since March \$315 million on Safeguard, which is another name of the ABM system. What is Safeguard now was Sentinel before, although the new Administration wanted to make a distinction between the two. When it comes to doling out defence contracts, however, the terms are conveniently switched around, for it was revealed that the \$315 million already spent on ABM néé Safeguard were originally voted for Sentinel. Deputy Secretary Packard had assured the Foreign Relations Committee on March 26 that money for Sentinel would not be spent on Safeguard.

Who fooled whom? None, I suppose, for Packard, like his boss, can devise a new word game to defend his action.

Pull-Out

The rumour that Nixon has decided on an eventual pullout of all American combat troops from South Vietnam persists and there are reasons to believe this rumour to be true. The mid-term election for Congress will be held next year and the President

as the titular head of the party would like to see Republicans take control of Congress. This can be done only if a dramatic de-escalation is achieved in South Vietnam which can revive the old myth that Democrats involve the country in war and Republicans bring peace.

It appears that Nixon plans to do little to solve domestic problems simply because his natural constituency consists of large chunks of middle and lower-middle class whites and Southern segregationists who would vote for a policy of status quo under the slogan of law and order. Here is indeed the making of a majority—a smug, unenlightened, reasonably affluent majority—who can be lulled into supporting anyone who succeeds in "bringing the boys back home". And, if on top of de-escalating in Vietnam, Nixon can show some progress in arms limitation talks with Moscow, this will be another feather to his cap. If Nixon shrewdly paces his moves in these two international fields while keeping the status quo at home by enforcing law and order, he can expect to win re-election in 1972. This is slowly emerging to be his strategy.

Before someone jumps to criticise this strategy as cynical and opportunistic, he should remember that American Presidents, to survive, have to weigh domestic opinion in devising policies. Johnson, it is believed, was too much obsessed with America's 'manifest destiny' in South-East Asia to see this clearly. He saw his overwhelming majority being slowly eroded by the Vietnam war and when he started to move towards peace talks with Hanoi, he found it too late and besides, as recent revelations by Theodore White showed, the Saigon regime took the wind out of his moves.

Kennedy, it has been pointed out in analyses of the Cuban missile crisis, played politics too, risked a nuclear war, it is argued now, not so much for the sake of world peace, but for domestic partisan politics. General Eisenhower, when informed by the CIA chief about the discovery of the

missiles, "took a sceptical view", according to the NBC correspondent Abel, "suspecting perhaps that Kennedy might be playing politics with Cuba on the eve of Congressional elections." That Kennedy did indeed play politics is borne out by the memoir of Roger Hilsman, head of intelligence in the State Department and then Assistant Secretary of State for the Far East. "If the missiles," Hilsman wrote, "were not important enough to justify a confrontation with the Soviet Union, as McNamara initially thought, yet were 'offensive', then the United States might not be in mortal danger, but the administration most certainly was."

Nixon is, therefore, playing a game with Vietnam as Kennedy presumably did with the Cuban missile crisis. Administration officials would certainly challenge this interpretation, as indeed Kennedy's aides would have during and immediately after the missile crisis. But, if, as is assumed, the Vietnam war is de-escalated next year, and when the story of this Vietnam *denouement* is written years later, the role of politics in terms of domestic exigencies will be fully revealed. At this stage, unfortunately, all of this remains as speculation.

While optimistic rumour of a possible de-escalation in Vietnam continues, the cost of the war piles up, draining the American treasury. Professor James Clayton of the University of Utah, an authority on the economic costs of wars to the American people, has just finished a book, entitled, *The Economic Impact of the Cold War* to be published next year. He has estimated \$330 billion as the final total of the Vietnamese war, provided it is de-escalated "in a hurry." This figure is, however, an absolute minimum. "A more realistic figure would be \$400 billion."

Clayton told the *Parade* magazine: "I know that figure boggles the mind. But it's true. People simply have no idea how much this nation spends on veterans' benefits and war interest payments. For example, World War II cost \$381 billion. Veterans' benefits from that war have already cost the nation \$75 billion and will

in the end reach the staggering total of \$476 billion. In addition, the nation will have to pay \$200 billion in interest payments. Do you realize what that adds up to? One trillion and fifty-seven billion dollars."

Clayton's final comment: "War is

not only hell, but fantastically expensive."

P.S. Come to think of it, American politics involves not only a word game, but also a numbers game. The Achieving Society is a Verbalizing Society, is an Accounting Society.

On The Transition Between Capitalism And Socialism

PAUL M. SWEETZ

AT the outset I want to thank Professor Bettelheim for his carefully considered critique. It continues and in some respects goes beyond his important work *La transition vers l'economie socialiste* which, as he says in that book's preface, is devoted to a "group of theoretical and practical questions which become increasingly important from year to year but on which there are very few studies."*

There is one crucial respect in which it seems to me that the above critique goes beyond the book. Let me quote again from the book's preface:

"What lends unity to the chapters which follow is that they constitute the beginning of a new critical reflection bearing on problems which are currently described as those of the 'transition towards socialism.' It will be seen that this expression is far from being adequate to the reality which it pretends to describe. What it does is to evoke a 'forward movement' of which the destination, more or less assured, would be socialism. Now what in fact is described in this way is an historical period which can be more accurately characterized as being that of 'the transition between capi-

talism and socialism.' Such a period does not lead to socialism in a linear fashion; it may lead there, but it can also lead to renewed forms of capitalism, notably to state capitalism.

"That this possibility exists appears progressively in the course of the chapters which follow; but it is not made the object of an explicit formulation before Chapter 6 (the last in the book); and in addition the terminology employed reflects this conclusion only partially."

What are called chapters in the book are all previously published essays, and their arrangement is roughly chronological, covering the years 1964-1967, with the last (Chapter 6) having been written more than a year after any of the others (both Chapter 6 and the preface are dated August 1967). From these facts it seems that we can deduce that up to a few years ago Bettelheim still held what I think can be called the traditional Marxist view that the transition from capitalism to socialism is a one-way street. By 1967 he had altered this to allow the *possibility* of a regression to capitalism. And by the end of 1968 (the above critique is dated December 15), he states without qualification that a new bourgeoisie is in power in the Soviet Union—also in Czechoslovakia and by implication in the other Warsaw Pact countries—and that "the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is the instrument of this new bourgeoisie." What was considered a possibility in 1967 is thus adjudged a *fait accompli* in 1968.

Let me hasten to add that in tracing this evolution of Bettelheim's position on the character of the transition period, I intend no criticism. Quite the contrary. Under the stimulus of the polemics between China and the Soviet Union plus personal observation in Yugoslavia, Monthly Review's editors had concluded as early as 1964 that the transition period is a two-way street. But, as that editorial made clear, we were not satisfied with the Chinese treatment of what had happened in Yugoslavia, and we felt that there was a crying need for more extensive and more profound analysis of what is evidently a crucially important problem. Fortunately, there are few if any Marxist better qualified than Charles Bettelheim to help fill this need. The appearance of his book and the further extension of his ideas along the lines of the above critique should set the stage for a lively and fruitful discussion.

First, then, an attempt to clear away certain misunderstandings. If I read him correctly, Bettelheim attributes to me the view that the very existence of "market relationships, money, and prices" is incompatible with socialism and makes impossible a transition to socialism; and a large part of his critique is devoted to an attack on this position. The evidence on which he relies is apparently the footnote which begins on page 7 of my piece in the October issue of MR. On re-reading the footnote I can see how it might lend itself to this interpretation, though it certainly did not occur to me at the time of writing. In any case, I want now to make clear that I never had the slightest intention or inclination to espouse the view Bettelheim attributes to me. The view I do hold is that market relationships (which of course imply money and prices) are *inevitable* under socialism for a long time, but that they constitute a standing danger to the system and unless strictly hedged in and controlled, will lead to degeneration and retrogression. In the words of the March 1964 editorial:

"We are not suggesting that produc-

*I had not yet read the book when I wrote the piece on Czechoslovakia for the October issue of MR. If I had, I could perhaps have expressed my thoughts in a way which would not have given rise to some of the misunderstandings noted below.

tion for profit can be immediately abolished, still less that a socialist society can hope to dispense with market relations in any near future. But we are saying that production for profit must systematically be discouraged and rapidly reduced to the smallest possible compass, and that market relations must be strictly supervised and controlled lest, like a metastasizing cancer, they get out of hand and fatally undermine the health of the socialist body politic."

Essentially the same point was made by Paul Baran and me in somewhat different terms :

"Marx emphasized in his Critique of the Gotha Program that the principle of equivalent exchange must survive in a socialist society for a considerable period as a guide to the efficient allocation and utilization of human material resources. By the same token, however, the evolution of socialism into communism requires an unremitting struggle against the principle, with a view to its ultimate replacement by the ideal 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his need.' . . . This is obviously not to imply that the communist society of the future can dispense with rational calculation ; what it does indicate is that the nature of the rationality involved in economic calculation undergoes a profound change. And this change in turn is but one manifestation of a thoroughgoing transformation of human needs and of the relations among men in society."

And I was at pains to state in the article criticized by Bettelheim that the important thing is not the existence of market relations in the Czech economy or even their present scope as compared to centralized planning; rather, "what is important is . . . the direction in which the system is moving, and here there can be no doubt (a) that the weight of the market elements has been growing for at least the last five years and (b) that one of the purposes of the liberalizing reforms of the last eight months has been to remove obstacles to the further streamlining of the Czech economy

along market lines." * And again :- "The contention is that whoever acts to strengthen the market instead of struggling against the market is, regardless of intentions, promoting capitalism and not socialism."

A corollary of this position is that the market|plan contradiction is not absolute contradiction in the sense that the two forces cannot exist side by side ; it is a contradiction in the sense that the two forces are in opposition to each other and are necessarily locked in an uninterrupted struggle for dominance. The question here is not how extensively the market is used, but the degree to which the market is used as an *independent* regulator. And of course this is not in the least a question of economic "laws" or of the consequences of certain economic forms. Rather it is a question of state power and economic *policy*. I must therefore reject entirely the line of criticism so much stressed by Bettelheim, to the effect that I am concerned only with surface phenomena, economic forms, secondary facts, etc. On the contrary, I am concerned with those ultimate questions which are decisive for the society of transition : the questions of the location of power and its uses to determine whether the society moves forward to socialism or backward to capitalism.

New Bourgeoisie

This leads logically to a consideration of Bettelheim's theory that a new bourgeoisie has come to power in the Soviet Union and the other Eastern European countries and that it is only because of this that market

*This is of course a very summary statement which does not take account of the possibility of *temporary* and *reversible* moves in one direction or the other. As Lenin saw it, the NEP was precisely a move of this kind. But the increasing reliance on the market in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe today is something entirely different. It is not regarded as a temporary retreat but rather as a socialist advance which receives ideological approval and legitimization.

relations have been encouraged and extended in recent years. He clearly believes that the Twentieth Congress marked a turning point in this process, but he also affirms that it "could not have had its particular content or effects if there had not *already* existed social relationships unfavorable to the dictatorship of the proletariat" and adds that this is "a good indication that the development of these social relationships was not 'determined' by the development of the market, but on the contrary was *anterior* to it."

I see the process in question somewhat differently, with the relationship between the development of a new bourgeoisie and the extension of the market being not a simple one of cause and effect but rather a dialectical one of reciprocal interaction. First comes the consolidation of power by a bureaucratic ruling stratum (not yet a ruling *class*), accompanied and followed by the depoliticizing of the masses. Without revolutionary enthusiasm and mass participation, centralized planning becomes increasingly authoritarian and rigid with resulting multiplication of economic difficulties and failures. In an attempt to solve these increasingly serious problems, the rulers turn to capitalist techniques, vesting increasing power within the economic enterprises in managements and relying for their guidance and control less on centralized planning and more and more on the impersonal pressures of the market. Under these circumstances the juridical form of state property becomes increasingly empty and real power over the means of production, which is the essence of the ownership concept, gravitates into the hands of the managerial elite. It is this group "owning" the means of production which naturally favors the further and faster extension of market relations. This process implies an erosion of the power and privileges of the "old" bureaucratic ruling stratum, with the result that conflicts develop between what the capitalist press calls the "liberalizers" (new bourgeoisie and the "conservatives" (old bureaucrats). The latter, however, have no program to cope with the society's mounting

economic problems and so can do little more than fight rearguard actions against the advance of the market-and profit-oriented new bourgeoisie. The logical end of this process, which has nowhere yet been reached (and of course may never be reached), is the establishment and legitimization of new forms of corporate private property. Only when this has occurred will we be able to speak of a new ruling class in the full sense of the term.

In practice Yugoslavia has travelled further along the road to capitalism than any other country, certainly much further than the Soviet Union where the old bureaucratic ruling stratum became extremely powerful and well entrenched in the three decades of Stalin's rule. It seems to me that the present phase of development in the Soviet Union can best be interpreted as one in which the bureaucratic elements, under the leadership of Brezhnev and Kosygin, are attempting to stem the further advance of the managerial elite. For reasons already indicated, I doubt that they can succeed—though of course they may slow down or even halt the process for quite a few years.

In my piece on Czechoslovakia I said that there are two possible responses to the failures of bureaucratic planning, one being increasing reliance on the market and the other a cultural revolution in the specific sense that the Chinese have given to that term: an all-out campaign to rouse the masses, to elevate the general level of political consciousness, to revitalize socialist ideals, to give increasing responsibility to the producers themselves at all levels of decision-making." Bettelheim interprets this to mean that I believe "the Soviet leaders... could have made a 'choice' between two 'techniques.'" Actually, I used neither of the two words he puts in quotation marks. I said, as above, that there are "two possible responses," and I added that for historical reasons the Soviet leadership was incapable of making the cultural revolution response. It should therefore be apparent, I think, that I have no disagreement with Bettelheim when he writes

that "what is involved here is not a 'choice' between two techniques that would enable the economy to 'progress,' but a *line of demarcation* between two political courses...." But when he adds "between two classes," I am not sure that I follow his thought.

Chinese Case

If he means that one political course (reliance on the market) is in the interests of the new bourgeoisie, and the other (a cultural revolution) is in the interests of the proletariat, I understand and agree. But if—as seems more likely from other passages—he means that which course will be followed depends on which class is in power, then I confess that I do not know what kind of *concrete* phenomena he is referring to. Take the Chinese case, for example. There is little doubt that a bureaucratic ruling stratum was growing and consolidating its power in China during the 1950s and early 1960s. By 1966 it seems clear that it already had a majority in the Central Committee of the Communist Party and occupied most of the decisive posts in the central and regional administrations. Most likely it would have soon moved in the direction of capitalism already pioneered by the Eastern European countries. But Mao and a small group of faithful followers refused to acquiesce in this retrogression. Using the at least partly spontaneous Red Guard movement as their initial weapon, they launched the Cultural Revolution, roused the masses, unseated the bureaucratic leaders, and in this way insured that China would continue on the road to socialism at least for the present and near future.

Would Bettelheim "explain" this process by saying that up to 1966 the proletariat was losing power to a new bourgeoisie but then at the last minute turned around and reasserted its class dominance? If we assume that Mao and his group (including the decisive leadership of the mass media and the Red Army) are "instruments of the proletariat," then the statement becomes a mere truism.

But what is the ground for making such an assumption? What do we really know about the role of the proletariat or of Mao's relations to the proletariat? Do such "explanations" add anything to our understanding of what actually happened in the past or is likely to happen in the future? Do they not, on the contrary, tend to convey a vastly oversimplified and hence misleading impression of the relations between social classes and political leadership in the transitional society? My own view, which is certainly subject to alteration in the light of further evidence and study, is that it is precisely in the transitional societies, or at least in a particular phase of the development of the transitional societies, that the "determinist" elements in historical causation are weakest and the "voluntarist" elements most significant.* If this is so, it means that in analysing these societies we must be specially on guard against thinking in terms of dogmas and formulas.

Bettelheim's interesting remarks on the Cuban situation could easily form the starting point for an extended discussion. I will content myself with two points: (1) I think he greatly exaggerates the extent to which Fidel is under the sway of what Bettelheim calls the myth of the "disappearance" of market relations, money, prices, etc. Fidel knows, and has said on numerous occasions, that it is impossible to abolish overnight these economic categories inherited from capitalism. At the same time I believe Bettelheim is right in implying that serious errors have been made by the Cubans in shaping and implementing their economic policies. (2) I do not believe—and this is essentially a point that has already been made—that it helps to explain the nature of these policies and errors to

*For a discussion of the roles of determinism and voluntarism in Marxist theory, see Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy, "Lessons of Soviet Experience," MR, November 1967, pp. 18-20.

say that they are "related to political domination by a 'radicalized' section of the petty bourgeoisie." This is a formula, not an explanation.

In closing I want to say that though a discussion of this sort perhaps unavoidably stresses differences of opinion, nevertheless I find myself in far-reaching agreement with Charles Bettelheim's views on the transition economy as expressed in his book *La transition vers l'economie socialiste*. In particular I agree wholeheartedly with his penetrating analysis of property relationships in the transitional society. As summed up by his friend Gilles Martinet, Bettelheim's theory underlines... the relativity of the notion of property. Each economic unit is answerable at one and the same time to the state and to its own management. When the planning is overriding and rigorous, the state exercises to the maximum its powers as owner. But when planning becomes indicative and when the autonomy of the management permits an enterprise to make its own investments, to negotiate contracts, to decide on its production processes, this enterprise tends to substitute for the fiction of state property a new form of collective property.

I would prefer the term "corporate" to "collective" here since, at least in English, the latter is often used to refer to the whole society. But in substance this expresses in elegant form one of the crucial facets of what I called the plan/market contradiction.

I am hopeful that at long last we may be taking the first steps toward a viable theory of what is surely, along with imperialism, one of the two decisive phenomena of the world scene in the second half of the twentieth century, the society in transition between capitalism and socialism. But at the same time we should recognize that they are only first steps and that we need to know a great deal more about what is happening in the transitional societies. Bettelheim has perhaps done more than any one else to open up a tremendous and exciting field of study.

The Press

Rampage In Assembly

READER

THE police rampage inside the West Bengal Assembly on July 31 should not have caused the surprise it did. After Harekrishna Konar's 1967 experience in Howrah, after Mr Biswanath Mukherjee's experience a few months later the same year on Brigade Parade Ground, after what happened at the Durgapur Regional Engineering College recently, the Government should have known the stuff it was dealing with. Apparently it failed to do so. The United Front still seems to be in a sort of trance following its massive electoral victory, which is apt to make vision hazy.

The police action caused quite a sensation in the country. And not only because this was the first time it happened. The location being West Bengal, outstation newspapers lost no time in seeing in this a reflection of the general law and order situation. The papers, however, did not recall their own demands in the past that the police should not be 'curbed' in any way; perhaps at last it was clear to them what type of people these were, on whom the Government was trying to impose some restrictions. However, even if they did they did not admit it and the Government was blamed on very different counts.

The *Hindustan Times* says the incident was fostered by the climate of lawlessness that has been engendered in the State because of the UF Government's policies. The police force is confused and demoralised and an atmosphere of violence, fear, uncertainty and lawlessness has developed in the State. Reading the editorial it seemed that to some the police must always be associated with lathis and ruthlessness and they do not like things to be otherwise. In West Bengal only an attempt has been made to change the shape of things

and the *Hindustan Times*, like policemen themselves, has raised a shout and found that attempt itself to be a justification for the police running amok.

Similar views were expressed by the *Times of India* and the *Indian Express*. The former found the United Front Government a victim of its own "contradictory policy", of trying to control the administration and to foment agitation at the same time. This leads to a permissive atmosphere where it is extremely difficult to draw the line between legitimate expressions of grievance and subversive conduct. Strangely enough the *Indian Express* devoted the better part of its editorial on the subject of criticising the Prime Minister and a section of the Union Government for their 'flattery' of the West Bengal and Kerala Governments. Bank nationalisation was certainly a difficult pill to swallow and the Goenkas still seem to be suffering from a bitter taste in the mouth. Commenting on the police action the paper came out with the conclusion that the pretence that communism and communists could work within constitutional channels was blown sky-high. Going Naxal? Or is it the "inevitable meeting of extremes"?

Nixon in India

Richard Nixon's future policy of staying in Asia not as a military ally but as an economic co-operator, as reported in newspapers, should satisfy none but the newspapers. Indeed those not yet enamoured of the coca cola civilisation should see in this a greater danger for the Asian people, the danger of American neo-colonialism seeking to have deeper roots. Encouraging Asian initiatives in American terms means greater hold over a country's economy—Indians particularly should remember the Bokaro steel plant affair when the U. S. Government refused to assist a public sector enterprise. If that was in 'democratic' Johnson's time, one can well imagine what a Republican Nixon would demand. Having come to realise that military subjugation of

a people would no longer be possible in Asia, the Americans have taken the other course, to provide all help to the monopolist-landlord combine to rule for a few more years. Regarding Vietnam, President Nixon must have warned Mrs Gandhi that, any unconditional retreat from that country might give ideas to the communists here. Thus his appeal to Asian countries to help evolve a satisfactory formula. What that would be is yet unknown. So far as India is concerned, one thing is certain. The suppliers of trucks and gas cylinders to South Vietnam would force the Indian Government to ditto whatever formula emerges from the White House and be satisfied with whatever satisfies the Yankees.

The Indian Press, Mrs Gandhi had said, was against her. That was during the bank nationalisation days. Maybe they were then. In the present context, however, the Prime Minister should have no cause for complaint. They have all echoed her own sentiments. While the President's Asian

tour has been taken to dispel all doubts about the willingness of the United States to help Asian countries, his concept of collective security, the papers say, would have to be spelt out in clearer terms before it could be accepted. Mr Nixon himself has not yet made clear his idea.

The leftists' reception to Nixon was as expected. There was a minor demonstration in Delhi and in Calcutta; the United Front itself organized a big show of protest which unfortunately did not get its due share of the coverage because of happenings elsewhere in the city. Of course Mr Nixon not having come to Calcutta, the expression of leftist anger was not as intense as in Manila. For once *The Statesman* might take some credit for having forecast beforehand that "local comrades are unlikely to be able to make themselves the kind of nuisance that the Huks in Manila were".

Automation

News have appeared about the

Hindu having brought out a facsimile edition from a different centre. This is the first such edition in India. While the paper's proprietors might take pride in their 'achievement' one would not be entirely wrong to see in this a portent. If the *Hindu* can bear the cost so can papers like *The Statesman*, the *Times of India* and the *Hindustan Times* and there is no certainty that facsimile editions would not be the pattern in future. There is no need for having additional printing establishments, which means less people to employ, which in turn means less worry for the management, for the employees have knit themselves into a strong organisation. Incidentally the *Hindu* was one of the papers that did not implement the wage board recommendations for non-journalists and, claiming financial difficulties, closed down the *Sport and Pastime* office in Calcutta. Its staff were left to look out for themselves and a photographer is today lying critically ill in a Calcutta hospital while the *Hindu* is busy experimenting in advanced printing technology.

a plea for the rural Population

Smuggling of Rice into Statutory Rationed areas leads to depletion of stocks in rural areas, rise in prices and hardship to poor people.

IF SMUGGLING INTO RATIONED AREAS IS NOT STOPPED

large number of agricultural labour and small cultivators in West Bengal will suffer which will lead to a setback in agricultural production.

In the interest of the poor people in rural areas

**HELP YOUR GOVERNMENT
TO STOP RICE SMUGGLING**



Government of West Bengal

Reversal Of Power

THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN CHINA

Joan Robinson

Pelican Books, Price 5 sh.

JOAN Robinson's *The Cultural Revolution in China* should be of immense value to anyone in India—exposed mercilessly for long to the views, comments and reports of Sino-logists, China watchers, instant commentators and journalists of the “free” world—who is at all interested in finding out the broad contour of the happenings and meaning of the unique events that shook China from June 1966 onwards. It should, leastways, help restore some sense and balance,—so noticeably absent in the majority of the reports and the gleeful crowing over China's predicted disintegration and destruction—in our ideas of what it was all about.

The introduction of 34 pages is the best short account of the Cultural Revolution that I have read or hope to read. This is not surprising. The author, after all, is no less a person than the professor of Economics at Cambridge and one of the leading non-Marxist economists of the world. It is a brilliant piece of simple writing, remarkable as much for its precision and comprehension as for its lucidity and unemphatic objectivity. The centre piece is a report which the author received in Shanghai and which gives, besides a clear and frank narrative, a philosophical analysis of the Revolution. Five important documents including the crucial circular of May 16 and the famous 16-point directive make up the third chapter. The fourth and last part of the book is a record of reports and conversations with various persons and workers, not necessarily activists, who were in the thick of it and whose reactions and thoughts have been faithfully recorded.

Whatever else it was, the Cultural Revolution in China was not, as the most common commentary would

have it, a struggle for power in the sense that it is generally understood in countries where succession of rulers or change in the power structure is seen, rightly in most cases, as the outcome of intrigues and variable personal equations. Nor was it, the other commonly trotted out explanation, a plot engineered by Mao to cover up his failures on many fronts with the help of his wife and the Red Guards. The author points out at the outset that “the key to the conception of the Cultural Revolution, as its own spokesmen see it, lies in the Marxist analysis of society, refined and developed by Mao Tse-tung on the basis of his long experience of communism in China” (p 11). If this key is grasped and made use of, it becomes clear that “what took place between June 1966 and October 1967 certainly was a revolution, in the sense of an abrupt reversal of political power, carried out by a popular movement, as opposed to a coup d'état, an inner Party purge, or a general election. But it was a popular rising inspired and guided by the leader of the very regime which was established before it and which remains in being.” (p 24).

Stratification

Why did such an abrupt reversal become necessary? The answer is given in simple terms. Privilege and stratification had wormed their ways into the Party, administration and society. In the name of maintaining standards, suggestions for conniving at the trend, and even encouraging it, had become a policy with which the Rightists had started forcing their way to full power. The Cultural Revolution was aimed at reversing this trend.

The question still remains, how could this come about? The explanation is offered in terms of a Maoist extension of the Marxist dichotomy between the base of a social system and its superstructure. To transform society changing its base is not enough. For the superstructure reacts no less on the base than the base on the former. Social ownership of the means of production which con-

stitutes the base of socialism can ensure neither its own permanence, nor the automatic transformation of the institutions, organisations, and what is more, the culture and the attitude which form the superstructure. Unless co-operative culture replaces acquisitive culture, the base itself will be in danger. The Russian development is a depressing example of how a capitalist type superstructure can grow on a socialist base and start the slide-back to capitalism and imperialism. It was this fear more than anything else that drove Mao to demolish the imposing structure he himself had helped in building over the years.

Yet it would be wrong to regard the Cultural Revolution as primarily an attempt to exorcise Rightism from the erring managers in the cadres, the army and the administration. The whole movement was meant to be nothing short of class war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie—not the bourgeoisie identified by property, profession, birth or heredity but the bourgeoisie marked by the state of mind as revealed in conduct. The struggle was against all those who were Rightist at heart.

Setbacks

Joan Robinson makes no attempt to gloss over the setbacks in economic and other fields—, difficulties and confusion that the Revolution encountered at various stages of its progress. Nor does she feel called upon to answer many of the questions that keep cropping up in one's mind about the Revolution's aims and possible success.

Will man ever come to acquire a collective conscience which will supplant his individual acquisitive conscience? Is pursuit of private profit the most powerful stimulus to human enterprise or can it be surrogated to some other socially desirable propellant and finally eliminated? Can a better instrument than market mechanism be devised for measuring and supplying man's material wants in populous, industrial societies?

The author does not pretend to answer these and similar questions.

She makes however an important and interesting point at several places. She points out that the idealism of the objectives and the set tasks of the Revolution—impossible and starry-eyed as it may appear to even admirers in other countries—was often found based on solid Chinese common sense. She cites many examples—the Tachai experiment for instance—of how appeals to pride, honour and altruistic impulses achieved results, not because the Chinese common man had overnight become a saint but because these appeared to him to be sound common sense and were related to his needs and experience of daily living. And because this relation has somehow been made and maintained, one realises the uniqueness of the Cultural Revolution. “None of the great religions has succeeded in producing a satisfactory society. The purpose of the Thought of Mao Tse-tung is to create a setting in which the claims of the ideal are not at variance with the necessities of daily life.” (p. 44)

B. Roy

Second Thoughts On Ray

ABHIJIT MUKHOPADHYAY

NOT so infrequently one sees “House Full” notices in front of the show houses exhibiting *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne*. And eggheads as well as pigheads have heaped praise on Satyajit Ray for making such a wonderful film. All this is encouraging, for it gives a rude shock to those who go all out to spin money by producing films like *Balika Badhu* or *Chowringhee*. Really there is no reason why *GGBB* should not be liked by an average educated Bengali to whom, if not Lewis Carroll or La Fontaine, at least Upendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury and Sukumar Ray are known from childhood days. It must be said in this connection, that this point has been missed by some of our critics who have mentioned over-enthusiastically the English

and French authors in their review of *GGBB*, but never Ray's illustrious forefathers. Think of that sequence in which the sweets in giant containers come down from the sky, and the king, his Minister and the troops of Hulla gleefully grab the containers, become absorbed in consuming the sweets, forgetting easily their imminent duty to invade the kingdom of Shundi. Some of us may be reminded of Rabelais while reviewing this sequence, but to me, it became an animated visualization of the non-sense rhymes straight from the pages of Sukumar Ray's “Khai Khai”.

Yet on a foreigner all this is very likely to fall flat. For even high-class non-sense and fantasy have some local colour and to retain all the original spell in a translated version is a tough job. Maybe it is one of the reasons why *The Adventures of Goopy and Bagha* failed to click at the Berlin Film Festival. Ray's use of music based on Tagore, classical and folk tunes, dialogues sprinkled with dialect and his nonsensical humour have an essential local slant which is very difficult for a festival audience to grasp merely through sub-titles. Even a good programme note would not have sufficed.

But apart from these niceties there must be another valid reason which prompted the journalists to ask a pertinent question of Ray on the utility of making a film like *GGBB*. He answered by saying that problems have come to stay and the problem-ridden Indian people need some relaxation, and that he too is badly in need of it. Whatever may be the case, it should not be glossed over that the form and content of the film are far from any of the present-day realities of India.

From here we should have second thoughts on Ray. The identification gap between him and the contemporary realities of India is yet to be bridged. This is not the first time that Ray has set aside the burning issues of our times. With the solitary exception of *Mahanagar*, where only the semblance of a serious attempt was made to come to terms with the problem of urban unemploy-

ment, so many Ray films have been marked by a cavalier treatment of similar problems.

Not that his classic creations are to be belittled. But what remains to be said of *Kanchanjanga*, *Abhijan*, *Kapurush O Mahapurush*, *Nayak* and *Chiriakhana* after the first flow of encomium? Were these made to provide relaxation, either for the director or for us? Is something really wrong with Ray? Or how can one explain that his next venture is based on a story by one of the high priests of decadent Bengali literature in which the genuine realities of contemporary Bengali youth have cleverly been brushed off?

According to Santiago Alvarez, the Cuban film director, “inertia is complicity, acceptance is participation in the crime” if “in our times” we “wait for hunger and disease to fall of their own weight tomorrow or the day after”.

I, for one, am looking for that day when Ray will come out of his present inertia, for he is the only film-maker in this country from whom this can be expected.

Long Grind

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

SUDHIR Mukherjee has quite a few box-office hits to his credit and he has practised the formula more or less successfully. His *Andhar Surya* repeats the same old, crude sentimental pattern of storytelling and the result is an utterly stupid film. The drama has been built on mislaid mails and wrongly packed saris (an age-old practice of making the screen-lovers come closer) and the script is a bundle of over-worked cliches. Rina Ghosh struggles enough to fail as a sex-kitten and Mrinal Mukherjee as the young scientist here looks totally unpromising. Curiously enough, Dipti Roy and Deepak Mukherjee, supposedly among the dark horses of the Bengali screen, turn in quite poignant performances. But their moments are

brief. The rest is a long grind.

Sapnon Ka Saudagar (directed by Mahesh Kaul) is just another message film penned by Khaja Ahmed Abbas which displays the runaway theme with Raj Kapoor as the dream-peddling wanderer and Hema Malini as gypsy girl with an animal passion. The really dramatic potentials of their encounter have been spoiled by an illogical interpolation of melodrama coupled with an overdose of socialist realism, Abbas style. Raj Kapoor as the romantic vagabond is just unfunny and Hema Malini, though she appears fleshy enough, has a long way to go before she can attain her publicist's image as the dream-girl.

To cap these all, there is the fantastic *A Trip To The Moon* which should beat all others, hollow in the limitless absurdity of the whole scheme. Earthlings are hustled into the Moon, they wing to Mars and the celenites are plainly humans complete with galloping horses, marauding gorillas and an impressive array of Bombay beauties. A loony affair indeed.

Three Films

By A FILM CRITIC

SOME twenty people were shown this week two shorts and a feature film produced by Image India. There will not be much trouble perhaps in arranging to exhibit *Inquiry* (one reel) and *Ajker Shilpi* (one reel)—the latter is to be released by the West Bengal Government. But what about *Heerer Prajapati* (Diamond Butterfly)? It runs into eight reels, which, in the present circumstances, is not quite a commercial proposition. The Children's Film Society, not active in West Bengal, is thinking of arrangements by which two films of this length can be released regularly.

Inquiry is an animated art film about the Kailash Temple at Ellora. Through rhythmic arrangement of geometrical lines and music, it brings into life the emotions of rage, love

etc. immobilised in hewn rock. A successful experiment, it was awarded the best film prize in the State awards in animated film category.

The aim of *Ajker Shilpi* (Today's Artist), which was meant to be part of a series, is to bring the people closer to art and vice versa. The painter is Paritosh Sen. The commentary guides the spectators through the various phases he has passed. An interesting attempt, no doubt, but the commentary somehow gives the unfortunate impression that he went places, saw the works of masters and adapted his style to the dominating influence of the moment. This, of course, is not what happened.

However, both the shorts will serve to interpret art to the uninitiated. The experts too will not be disappointed.

Based on a story by Lila Majumdar, *Heerer Prajapati* at the beginning suffers from the temptation which a director of a children's film faces—to make it rather childish. The tendency is towards caricature, to emphasize what is obvious. But as the story—the search, by a detective (Rabi Ghosh), the durwan (Sekhar Chatterjee) and a host of others, for a diamond butterfly lost by an old untie (Rajlakshmi)—proceeds, the film becomes simpler and exciting, the music adequate, the acting uncontrived and the fun comes through. The open-air sequences—they dominate the film—are lyrical. That the film was shot within 12 or 13 days in the Maithon area is quite a feat, for which credit goes to the artists and the director, Santi Chowdhury.

Letters

After All The Frenzy

Perhaps I am intruding into regions traditionally dreaded by angels. But I think your comment about Russo-American collaboration in "After all the Frenzy", (July 26) is quite correct. Let us analyse the facts.

Zond 4 and 5 circled round the moon and returned to earth. They were unmanned. The Americans skipped this phase and sent up their Appollo and performed the same feats with men on board. Presumably they took advantage of the Russian experiments and repetition was not necessary. A curious item of information immediately after the Zond flights and before the corresponding Apollo flight round the moon was the entry of American warships into the Black Sea. Was it a rendezvous between the Americans and Russians to exchange technical information and material? Curiously again, Russian warships ostensibly on their way to Cuba, stood by Florida immediately before Apollo 11 was blasted off. Was the code for using Luna 15, if the need arose, exchanged?

The timing of the movements of warships (not merchant marine) is indeed intriguing.

Perhaps collaboration in space technology as envisaged by Kennedy and Khrushchev is now yielding dividends and an era of consolidation of military collusion between America and Russia rather than a "beginning of collective security in space" has begun.

P. Bhattacharyya
Kenduadihi

Was it Sir Isaac Newton (who asked, after hearing Milton's *Paradise Lost*, . . . but what does it prove?) Like him, you are sceptical about the saga of the moon landing (July 26). If heart transplantation operations, and the landing on the Moon do not indicate a new era in human history what else is there for boasting in this century?

I do agree with you, however, that had not the dollars and roubles been spent on the expedition to the Moon the money would have been spent on killing the Vietnamese and aggression against Czechoslovakia and China. But shame and glory do exist side by side in this world.

Nilratan Kanjilal
Bhaturia, 24-Parganas

Bank Take-Over

Banks are ganglions of modern economic life and to talk of "regulating economic life" without bank nationalisation is just nonsense. The big question, however remains: who regulates the regulator, which class is the controller? Introducing 'socialism' in a country dominated by non-socialist relations of production is always looked upon with scepticism by Marxists but ex-Marxists try to pass it off as socialism. That the CPI will be rallying behind Indira Gandhi is a foregone conclusion. But will the CP(M) forget nothing and learn nothing? Will they help re-establish the image of the discredited leaders? The Masanis, of course, strongly oppose any extension of even capitalist nationalisation, for each act of nationalisation shows that society can get along without the capitalist entrepreneur. Also, with banks in private hands, the monopolists can dominate them completely, while after nationalisation there is no insurance against outside interference, since other capitalists competing with them also try to make use of the State. The State works as the organ of the ruling class as a whole but this does not necessarily coincide in every respect with the interests of individual concerns.

The struggle between Indira and Morarji is in a sense a struggle between the entrenched capitalists and the rising ones. It also shows that capitalism in India is in a deep crisis and can no longer solve its problem in the old way. Partial patching up of the doomed regime with the object of maintaining the rule of the bourgeoisie is what the carrot capitalists are trying. Reform versus revolution—that is the formula of the 'progressive' Indira Gandhi.

P. C. D.
Calcutta.

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Naxalites

Reader's rejoinder (July 19) to my letter is obviously intended to delight those petty-bourgeois intellectuals who are fond of indulging in some sort of intellectual gymnastics. These people are adept in unsettling a settled fact by sheer jugglery of words; and when the moment for the final showdown comes, they lose no time in beating a hasty retreat. That the capitalist press is 'publicising' the Naxalities in order to sow seeds of disruption in the ranks of the fast expanding CPI(M) is a fact which can be overlooked or underestimated only by the worst of the cynics. Will Reader explain why Nagi Reddy, Parimal Das Gupta and others broke away from the Charu Mazumdar group? What led the two-month-old CPI(ML) to suspend Asit Sen, and twelve other prominent Naxalites who till only the other day were all praise for that party? His answer may be: they are renegades. Then, are not most of the Naxalites renegades? Finally, Naxalites and their advocates seem to forget that Lenin was there to pilot the Bolshevik movement. Is Charu Babu Lenin? Reader, go on reading, but please be judicious. Petty-bourgeois revolutionism does never pay.

Dipak Chaudhuri
Malda

Police Hooliganism

The gang of police-hooligans have done an important task—they have broken the illusions of those who want us to believe that socialism can come through parliamentarism and that radical change is possible by peaceful means. By their vandalism, the police have also hastened the collapse of the bourgeois State order. This machinery, as Lenin pointed out, is not meant to help any radical government; it has to be destroyed or else the forces of reaction will act, as they did on July 31.

PRIYADHAN NANDY
Goralgacha, Hooghly

Apprentice Engineers

Apropos Mr Jayanta Ghosal's article 'Apprentice Engineers', (July 5) I would like to suggest one more corrective measure. Cordial relationship between the apprentices and the training centre is as essential as the relationship between the training centre and the plant authorities. Only taking interviews and written tests periodically will not suffice. The training centre staff should take the trouble of approaching the plant bosses to enquire about its training activities. They should ask how the apprentices are being trained and how much they are learning. If in the name of training they are being led to wrong tracks, the training centre should suggest suitable corrective measures. Unless this relationship grows, the cause of training is bound to suffer.

Aniruddha Sen Gupta,
Sindri, Dhanbad.

Romeo And Juliet

In his rejoinder (July 19) to my letter (July 5) Mr Mukhopadhyay writes that Zeffirelli's version of Romeo and Juliet is an interpretation from the angle of modern youth—a contemporary reality—and goes on to add that the agony and ecstasy of forbidden love is very much present in the film. Again, he writes that there is no 'crass realism' in the film. His defence is contradictory. Surely, he won't disagree that, in between, crass realism is definitely more a contemporary reality than ecstasy in love. And as to visual images bordering on "sheer poetry", surely, Romeo's pulling up of under-garments in the bed-room scene is not appropriate to the demonstration of ecstatic love that Mr Mukhopadhyay claims to be "very much present".

Kamal Kanti Ray Choudhury
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