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MURDERS IN MIDNAPORE

MORE than a week has passed without much being known of the circumstances in which eight prisoners of the Midnapore central jail were done in. The political parties are conniving with the Government at this conspiracy to black out a massacre unparalleled even in British days, for they have lapsed into silence over the incident after a feeble formal protest. They are too engrossed in bracing themselves for a mid-term poll to attend to other matters, though the prospects of an early election remain as erratic as prices in stock markets. In fact, they have converted the murders in Midnapore into another argument for an early poll—the magic cure of all ailments of the State. The records of the two UF ministries are too black to sustain the claim that a left government will put an end to such barbarities. The Home Department in West Bengal has already swung between two poles—Gandhian Ajoy Mukherjee and Marxist Jyoti Basu—without much noticeable change in the behaviour of the police; they will not be transformed into a humane force under a third Home Minister of an intermediate hue. The leftist prescription of an early election for all that is happening in the State is clearly diversionary—a strategy to help a reactionary government and an inactionary opposition.

Under the cover provided by the left parties the Government is, in the mean time, trying hard to water down the crime. The first reports stated that eight Naxalites in the jail had been killed in police firing. A revised version of the facts was issued the next day exonerating the police and passing the responsibility for firing to the warders. It seems the police went there on a mercy mission; they fired tear-gas shells only to enable the fire brigade to put out the fire so that the prisoners might not die in flames. Even if this is correct, the Government is not absolved, for the warders are under the Prisons Directorate which is as much a limb of the Government as the Police Directorate is. Obviously, the Government's intention is to make out a case that the firing was in self-defence and for saving the lives of some kidnapped warders. If the threat to the warders was really so serious, how is it that only two warders were injured, and that too not seriously, while about a score were killed or wounded on the other side? The government story has a familiar ring; such firings have often been resorted to

by the police in Calcutta to save themselves from murderous assaults by unarmed arrested Naxalites while they were being taken to police stations. What arrested Naxalites can do on the streets, they can do as well in prisons. In more than one sense stone walls do not a prison make.

Lest this old hat should not sell, the Government has varied the story further. Denying the earlier report that all the eight were killed in firing, it has, on the basis of so-called autopsy reports, given out that only three had died of bullet wounds while five succumbed to injuries of other types. Simultaneously, it has found out—it is not clear whether from the autopsy reports—that only three of the killed were Naxalites and the rest had been held for other offences. If the loose ends are tied up the story will be that when the Naxalites had killed five of the fellow-prisoners who were opposed to their politics the warders had to fire to prevent further slaughter resulting in the death of three Naxalites. The task of rounding off the story will perhaps be entrusted to the officer who will inquire into the incident. The Government may well consider if one of those high officers into whose affairs the CBI is now enquiring should be drafted for this purpose; he will have reasons to ingratiate himself with the Government. Maybe the counsel is redundant; maybe the Government has already thought of such defensive measures. What the Government has forgotten is that it has lost its credibility. Few people believe in post-mortem reports known only to the Government or in case histories as divulged by the police. After all that the Government has said the fact remains that all those killed were from Gopiballavpur and at least half of the injured in hospital are from that area. It is as common for a Naxalite to be held for petty larceny as for murder, and there may be instances of the same person being held for both. That a man was arrested for theft is no proof that he was not a Naxalite; such quibbling does not become a government which

refuses to make any distinction between the Naxalites and ordinary criminals. That the killed were from Gopiballavpur proves that they were Naxalites, whatever might have been the charges against them. Whether they were killed by the police or some hardened convicts appointed wardens, they were victims of the Government's programme of extermination of the Naxalites.

What Happened At Midnapore ?

A correspondent writes :

What this writer has gathered from certain Kharagpur relations of his about the recent killing of undertrial Naxalite prisoners in Midnapore Jail is most disturbing. The newspapers are hinting—still vaguely—that the whole business was the outcome of a clash between two groups of Naxalite prisoners.

The account this writer has gathered from extremely reliable sources is entirely different. About 10 Naxalite prisoners were due to be released on that particular date. But the prisoners had come to know from some secret source that this was just a plan to trap them. The police were obliged under court orders to let them off, but they did not want to do that at all. The prisoners heard that the police had laid the trap in the following manner: The prisoners would be let out of the jail, but police vans with strong reinforcements would be waiting for them at the gate. They would be at once rearrested and this time detained under the PVA Act. Certainly some of them would try to escape and they would be instantly shot dead. This was the supposed plan the Naxalites had somehow got wind of.

Consequently, when in the morning the warders told the prisoners that they had been acquitted and were to leave the jail immediately, they flatly refused to do so on that day. The warders were confused and went back for the time. As it

happened, it was a visiting day and hundreds of prisoners' relations gathered at the gate about 9 a.m. But they were refused permission and were rudely told to go back, some of the more insistent women visitors, one of whom this writer met, being grossly insulted by the jail authorities. But the problem remained, for even after lunch the prisoners, anticipating the deadly trap, refused to leave. Then, at about 4 p.m., a couple of warders went to the Naxalite cells and started to hurl filthy abuses at the prisoners who had refused to budge. The Naxalites provided characteristic rejoinders, and this sort of thing went on for several minutes. In the mean time, a large CRP and EFR force had been brought in and kept in readiness. Then a warder hit one of the Naxalites on the face with his fist. The inevitable followed. The Naxalites hurled themselves on the warders—but only for a few seconds. For the police and the EFR came rushing in and started shooting the Naxalites indiscriminately and then smashing the heads of the others with rifle butts. One of the informants of this writer was at the gate and heard the sound of the firing continuing intermittently for several minutes. The first police trap had failed; but the second succeeded with a vengeance.

If this account is true or even partially true, what about the official version that it was all the outcome of a fight between two groups of Naxalite prisoners? Let the public judge and decide. But the short-memoried public should recall something. Only a few months ago an almost identical incident had taken place at the same venue. On that occasion the police had launched a brutal assault on the undertrial Naxalites in Midnapore Jail, seriously injuring scores of them on the plea that they had attacked Mr Deben Das, a CPI MLA who had been visiting the prisoners. Then too, the relations had been debarred from seeing their wards in prison. Then too, the number of the killed and the wounded had not been disclosed.

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Are not all these part of a single premeditated pattern, and is this highly *democratic* pattern of administrative activity going to repeat itself from time to time?

Comments

Poland

Poland is in trouble. In 1956, the disorders at Poznan were political in nature and could be explained as a reaction to—though not against—the destalinization speech of Mr Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the CPSU: pent-up nationalist feelings found an outlet in the protest against the overwhelming and, perhaps, overbearing presence of Russian troops. Mr Gomulka, once in jail, came to power and a period of fraternisation of relations with the Soviet Union and relaxation at home followed. But of late there has been student trouble, and the undercurrent of hostility to the Soviet Union became marked after the invasion of Czechoslovakia. There have been demonstrations, students and teachers have been expelled and action has been taken against intellectuals. What kind of a world the dissidents want is not very clear. Perhaps their source of inspiration is the so-called liberalism of the West. It so, it speaks of the failure of the communist-bureaucrats to give them a living ideology.

It is rather curious that relaxation of tensions provokes the Poles and other East European countries into assertions of a mini-rebellion against authority. The recent agreement with Bonn over the Oder-Neisse frontier should have been a big boost to the Polish Government. Instead the agreement—unratified yet—has almost coincided with food riots on a scale that has forced Mr Gomulka to quit as first Secretary of the Communist Party, and four other important members from the Polit Bureau. Poland had a bad harvest last year, followed by a severe winter and floods; the grain crop this year was down by 22

per cent over 1969, leading to a shortage of fodder which in turn affected meat supplies; the Comecon arrangement has not helped her out of the deteriorating situation—it may have made the situation worse. Experiments with new economic planning, based on market forces while 85 percent of agriculture continues to be in private hands, have provided no way out. On the contrary, they encouraged the nascent bourgeois forces. A steep price rise before Christmas has now led to riots.

Maoists, of course, would not be surprised. To them, the process set in motion all over Eastern Europe, except Albania, is one of transition from socialism to capitalism and is bound to be marked by upheavals. But the trouble is, those who lead the upheavals will cheer like mad if President Nixon rides through their streets. Aren't they bored with Vietnam?

So far the Russians have not accused the West German Government of complicity in the incidents in Poland, though the main reason they advanced for their action in Czechoslovakia was the threat of a West German march into Prague. The West Germans have now become respectable, thanks to Herr Brandt and their ability to provide massive credits and technical know-how. Meanwhile, Russian troops, tanks, ships and aircraft are reportedly helping the Polish regime to tide over the crisis.

Waiting For Elections

Even political parties which do not swear by Mao are like fish in water in one respect: they all are tempted by the election bait held out, withdrawn, held out again by Mrs Gandhi. Of course sitting MPs and MLAs are not all dying for the polling booth—elections, after all, are like the state lotteries and no one can be certain. But there are people who are not satisfied with the allowances and privileges they get as legislators; they want power and are pre-

pared to face the hazards. In West Bengal, the restlessness is marked because it does not even have a legislature functioning. The fish are gasping for breath. But Mrs Gandhi can be tantalising in the extreme.

Political prophets are most unreliable. Some of them predicted that if the Supreme Court restored the privy purses and privileges of the princes, Mrs Gandhi would dissolve Parliament and take the plunge. After the judgment the same pundits said that, in view of the judgment, there would be no elections. Who can probe the logic of New Delhi?

There is justifiable indignation in many quarters over the Supreme Court judgment. But was it not clear what it would be from almost the beginning of the legal contestation? The way Mrs Gandhi took the decision on the eve of the Kerala elections made some people think that she almost wanted the Supreme Court to declare it ultra vires the Constitution. The heroics accomplished, she could enjoy the newspaper headlines and look forward, in leisure, to the anti-climax.

As for interpretations of the Constitution, it has been pointed out that it was drafted by an Assembly representative of 12 per cent of the population. But in bourgeois politics, even when elections are based on adult franchise, it is this small percentage that matters. The majority of adult voters would have voted in any case for Nehru and company and they would have drafted the same constitution, their voices quivering with emotion over the tryst or flirtation or fornication with Destiny while sanctifying the base wedlock with vested interests. So you cannot curse, with all conviction, the Supreme Court. The majority of the Court paid an indirect tribute to the memory of Sardar Patel who had saved the princes from the sandstorm of history. And not Sardar Patel alone. Besides, in the context of what is happening in the country today, the ballyhoo over the privy purses is rather unreal. The Republic is littered with clandestine privy purses of all

sorts ; for instance, ministerial salaries and allowances.

Parliament has adjourned. But no one knows what Mrs Gandhi is up to. The momentous Sunday Cabinet meeting, later postponed, was, it is learnt, meant to decide sugar policy. Mrs Gandhi seems to have world enough and time to keep her opponents and courtiers in jitters. Meanwhile another of her fortresses has fallen. The Congress-dominated Ministry in Bihar is out. But readers will be disappointed if they expect this journal to give an analysis of the Bihar scene where six—some say seven—ministries have functioned since the 1967 elections. Memory falters to record the fluctuating fortunes of the six or seven. All questions about general knowledge of the state ministries should be kept out of intelligence tests in future. Underfed students living and studying—if at all—in miserable conditions cannot cope with the Indian sub-continent in their courses. Maybe that is one of the reasons why many in West Bengal are resorting to other courses.

Away From Bangkok

Newspapers last week were too busy reporting the Asian Games to take note of less exciting things happening far away from glittering Bangkok. The declaration of emergency in the three southern provinces of Thailand was perhaps no happening at all to the world outside. Who cares if the 800,000 famished and ragtag peasants of the south are declared free-fire targets of Thai bombers? One might of course ask the Thai Air Chief Marshal Dawee Chullasapya whether such a total war was necessary if there were, as he said, "only 12 to 20 hard-core separatists in the southern provinces". But there was never any doubt about the bloody determination of the Bangkok Government to destroy the "bandits" in the south whatever may be their number.

Perhaps Charusathien, the Thai strongman, has learnt enough of

American special war techniques to rely solely on the stick. Carrots too were dangled before the insurgents. Experts in Bangkok admitted that the people of the south, 80% of whom are Muslims, have ample reason to be alienated from the government represented by high and mighty officials, and show hostility towards oppressive landlords and moneylenders who profess Buddhism. In such a situation dissidence has taken on a religious character and the guerilla organisation in fact calls itself the Moslem National Liberation Front. Solution to this problem, liberals in Bangkok say, lies in rapid economic development of the region and opening of new lands to land-hungry peasants. Praphas had his own brand of carrots. Scholarships have been awarded to the Muslim students of the south and sons and nephews of former Muslim governors have been offered advisory posts. These offers were coupled with mobilisation of the Thai Fifth Army and fighter-bombers and helicopter gunships to isolate and crush the hard core.

But last month it became apparent that the counsel of the "bandits" and "communist terrorists" counted much more with the Muslim peasants than the wooing of Bangkok. The guerilla fish swam freely among the population and hit the army and police patrols at will. A number of oppressive officials were liquidated and communication lines were cut off. Robert Thompson, quoted by our scholarly Police Commissioner, this time was of no help. The majority of the population being ethnic Malaysians, the same as the guerillas, it was next to impossible to isolate the sympathetic population into strategic hamlets—what Robert Thompson could do with the minority Chinese during the 12-year Malayan emergency. The only course left is the use of the military sledge-hammer to terrorise the sympathetic population into passivity. A special budgetary increase of \$200,000 was approved for supporting military action in the south. And

with the declaration of emergency last week the signal was given for unleashing a total war against the people of Pattani, Narathiwat and Yala provinces.

The logic here could not be different from what has been seen in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. The more the repression the tougher becomes the resistance. The guerillas of South Thailand have moreover powerful friends across the border. The Malayan National Liberation Army under the Malayan Communist Party is operating in strength in the jungles of West Malaysia bordering Thailand. And the cooperation of the Thai and Malayan guerillas across the border has been more fruitful than that of the counter-insurgency commands of Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur.

The Kabul Conference

Economic groupings have one advantage over political entente in that they can draw upon semantics to cover up their actual purpose. When at the opening session of the Kabul Conference on Economic Co-operation, the Indian Foreign Minister was trying to induce the Asian nations to carve out an Asian identity beyond the pale of Western influence, he was looking quite tall. But shorn of verbiage, the speech was so much sophistry. Its real aim was to lay out a common market of sorts in Asia where India could trade, under the protection of preferential tariffs, with her comparatively have-not neighbours and fill her own coffers. For quite some time New Delhi has been working on such a plan of foreign relations. The first indication came from Mrs Gandhi at the UN in October when she chided the West for its non-cooperation and called upon the Third World to go in for regional co-operation for their survival. But it was in Bangkok last month that a definitive idea of such co-operation could be mooted. Obviously India was the most enthusiastic partner.

When the Asian nations met at

Kabul last week they were to give an institutional form to the Bangkok proposals. But the conference ran into rough weather from the very beginning. Serious differences of opinion among the participants and bickerings at times reached a high point. However, after much lobbying the drafting committee could bring out a communique announcing the setting up of an Asian Clearing Union using a unit of payment in commerce between member states. It has been decided, in addition, that a trade expansion programme is to be reviewed by an inter-governmental committee. Other proposals were shelved for the time being.

Indian diplomacy has some reasons to gloat over its feat in Kabul. From the outset, India went out of her way to make the conference a success and offered, on her own, tariff cuts to others. On the other hand, Japan was opposed to the entire gamut of proposals. Japan's apprehension was understandable. In the past few years she has studiously built up a vast economic empire in Asia and evidently she finds in this co-operative move, with India leading, an encroachment into what she thinks her exclusive preserve. Naturally she is keen to stall the nibblers. The smaller fry have either aligned themselves with one of the two principal contenders or remained non-committal. The proposal for Peking's presence made by Pakistan was cold-shouldered by all concerned. This is the import of the Kabul Conference. Small wonder then that no consensus could be reached. A reliable source has reportedly complained about undercover activities by the USA to wean away tiny States from this regional co-operation scheme. The Big Powers do not like even this comic opera by their satellites.

Frontier is posted every Thursday afternoon, but there is no knowing when the subscribers and agents will get it. There is nothing we can do about it.

Owing, again, to postal dislocation, the weekly *View* from Delhi is not being received.

Pakistani Elections—II

Tougher Job For Bhutto

ASHIM MUKHOPADHYAY

THE real excitement was in West Pakistan where the People's Party of Mr Z. A. Bhutto had two strong rivals, the Council Muslim League in the Punjab, and the NAP in the North-West Frontier. There the results also prove that the PPP's path was much more thorny than that of the Awami League. Out of the 119 seats it contested the PPP has secured 81. The table given below makes the picture perfectly clear.

East Pakistan

Awami League	.. 151
Pakistan People's Party	.. 81
Independent	.. 1

West Pakistan

Pakistan People's Party	.. 81
Qayyum League	.. 9
Council Muslim League	.. 7
Jamaat-i-ulema-i-Pakistan (Hazari group)	.. 7
National Awami Party (Wali group)	.. 5
Jamaat-i-Islami	.. 4
Convention Muslim League	.. 2
Independents	.. 15

This table shows that unlike the Awami League, the PPP has still many opponents who though individually weak may collectively pose a grave threat to it. A combination of the anti-PPP like-minded forces is always possible, as it was in the months preceding the elections. On June 24, 1970, five right-wing political parties—the PDP, the Jamaat-i-Islami, Markazi Jama'atul-Islam (Thanvi group), Jama'iat-ul-ulema-i-Pakistan and Jama'iat Ale Hadis started talks for an alliance and finally formed the "Islam Pasand" group. This alliance, however, did not bear any fruit because the allies did not cooperate with one another and to some extent they underestimated the increasing

popularity of the PPP. But now, as the verdict of the people has definitely gone in favour of the PPP, for their very existence these conservative political parties will surely unite and their combined strength will be a serious factor for the PPP chief. Had there been any real understanding and co-operation between the Council Muslim League and the Jamaat-i-Islami in the Punjab and the Qayyum Muslim League and the Sind United Front of Mr G. M. Sayyad in Sind, then the PPP would have lost a few more seats in the National Assembly. If they now unite, the PPP will have to face many difficulties in the Assembly. In spite of their united distrust, at least on one point, the Qayyum League, the Council Muslim League, the Jamaat-i-Islami, the Jama'iat-i-ulema-i-Pakistan and the Convention League agree with one another, that is they want a strong Islamic State. They consider the PPP's Islamic Socialism a serious impediment to the foundation of such a State. If these parties now unite and can win over some Independents, the PPP will be in trouble. The position may be like this:

PPP	.. 81
Qayyum League	.. 9
Council League	.. 7
Jama'iat-i-ulema-i-Pakistan	.. 7
Jamaat-i-Islami	.. 4
Convention Muslim League	.. 2
Independents	.. 5
Total	.. 34

The position of the PPP will be weaker after the election to the 16 remaining National Assembly seats in East Pakistan (nine are in the devastated areas of the coastal East Pakistan and seven are reserved for women).

But achievement of an absolute

majority in the National and Provincial Assemblies does not mean that the Awami League will be invited to walk along a path covered with roses. Actually, neither Sheikh Mujibur Rahman nor Bhutto can envy each other. Elections can only express public opinion but they do not always mean transfer of power. In the case of Pakistan, it is as true and clear as broad daylight.

After his victory in the National Assembly elections Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has reiterated his determination to implement the Six Point Programme. But the Legal Framework Order of President Yahya Khan is a serious challenge to it. Clause No. 20(4) says, that all powers including legislative, administrative and financial, shall be distributed between the Federal Government and the provinces, the provinces shall have maximum autonomy, that is to say maximum legislative, administrative and financial powers but the Federal Government shall also have adequate powers including legislative, administrative and financial powers to discharge its responsibilities in relation to external and internal affairs and to preserve the independence and territorial integrity of the country.

For Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who wants a strong Centre, it may not be a humiliation to agree with this clause but Mujibur Rahman, who has won the elections by his promise to create a fully autonomous East Pakistan, will be put to a hard test. If he accepts the demands of President Yahya, he will get a less autonomous East Pakistan and there will be a more powerful Centre. This will strike at the very root of the growing Bengali nationalism and the Bengalis may lose their faith in him.

Secondly, if Mujibur Rahman continues to oscillate between a strong Centre and a strong East Pakistan, he will be a victim of Clause No. 24 of the Legal Framework Order which has already fixed a 120-day time-limit for the making of the Constitution. If he hastily tries to exert his strength which

he is expected to do because of his absolute majority, the Constitution Bill which he will draft may be rejected. Remember: "The Constitution Bill, as passed by the National Assembly, shall be presented to the President for authentication. The National Assembly shall stand dissolved in the event that authentication is refused."

But can Mujibur escape the blows of the Legal Framework Order by joining hands with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto? There is only one factor which may induce them to do so, that is public opinion. It is after a long 23 years that the Pakistanis are expecting a stable parliamentary government. This, besides regional nationalism, was also a basic factor which inspired them to vote for the PPP, and the Awami League. Both Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Mujibur Rahman are conscious of it.

But such an understanding between the two will be very hard to come by. Mr Bhutto, basically in favour of a strong Centre, cannot accept Mr Rahman's ideas of a strong, fully autonomous Bengal and a loose federation. It has already been said that the conservative Islamic parties also want a strong Centre and if Mr Bhutto ever shows any inclination towards Mr Rahman's programme, they will surely unite against the PPP. Opposition to Mr Bhutto may come also from the army. The army wants a strong Centre and moderate reforms. It should be remembered that after the "October Revolution of 1958", Field Marshal Ayub Khan introduced some moderate reforms in land, and the act was much appreciated by the officers in the army. Therefore, if Mr Bhutto concedes fully the programme of Mujibur Rahman, he will not receive the support of the army, which is most vital for his existence. Actually, in West Pakistan there are two claimants to the support of the army, the PPP chief—Mr Bhutto and President Yahya Khan. If Mr Bhutto surrenders to Mujibur Rahman the

army will definitely go to the side of President Yahya Khan.

Kashmir and Farakka

Another hurdle to any mutual understanding between Mr Bhutto and Mr Rahman is Kashmir. What Mr Bhutto thinks about Kashmir matters little to Rahman and what makes Mr Rahman anxious about Farakka does not influence Mr Bhutto. For instance, in a radio broadcast and telecast on November 18, 1970 Mr Bhutto said: "Pakistan without Kashmir is like a body without head." But he did not use such strong words about Farakka when he said, "We will seek to resolve the Farakka dispute." Similarly, Mr Rahman in his radio broadcast and telecast (*Pakistan Times*, October 29, 1970) said "The threat of grave and permanent damage to the economy of Bengal posed by the completion of the Farakka Barrage must be immediately met. Every effort must be made for a just solution without further delay." But what he said about Kashmir was superficial: "We have emphasised the importance of a just settlement of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the United Nations resolutions."

All these prove that these two leaders are taking greater interest in their respective regions. They are nationalists on a regional basis and do not pose as all-Pakistan leaders. This difference between the two has been widened by the results of the elections. It shows that the PPP is solely a West Pakistani party without any base in East Pakistan while the Awami League, although a giant in the East, is microscopical in the west.

But the President himself is not in an enviable position. If the Constitution Bill fails, he will have to share the blame. The people of Pakistan will not only accuse Mr Bhutto and Mr Rahman but will also suspect that the President wants to remain in power. In that case there will surely be a repetition of the blood bath of 1968-69. If on the other hand he now retires and leaves the field free for the political parties, he will

be the gainer. Because, in future if Mr Bhutto and Mr Rahman fail to co-operate, which is not very unlikely, the Pakistanis will accuse them and not the President.

Some political observers are also speaking of a confrontation between the President and the political leaders over a "plan" to declare the Constituent Assembly a sovereign body in its own right.

Several advisers to Mr Bhutto and Mr Rahman want the assembly to challenge President Yahya's right to fix a time limit of 120 days for drawing up a constitution. In addition, they suggest that the assembly should declare itself a sovereign body at its first session and reject the basic guidelines for the constitution laid down by the President.

Mr Bhutto admitted that the plan was being discussed, but he hinted that his party was not prepared to provoke a confrontation. He did, however, expect that a challenge would be made by Sheikh Mujibur, and he implied that his own party would have to support the move.

Mr Bhutto said: "When the President decided to hold the elections he should have realized that an army dictatorship and popularly elected representatives cannot coexist."

However, an intermittent shifting of power between the political parties and the army is not a good sign. It will not restore peace and administrative efficiency so vitally needed for the country's progress. The only solution, perhaps, is an alliance of like-minded liberal forces like the PPP, the Awami League and the National Awami Party (Wali, Muzaffar group) with a common programme of a strong Centre and strong provinces. It is to be noted that in spite of its tragic defeat the NAP in East Pakistan is still ready to work jointly with the Awami League. Again, both for Mr Bhutto and Mr Rahman, an understanding with the NAP in West Pakistan would make their position better in Baluchistan, the North West Frontier Province and in the Tribal Areas.

The main weakness of both the

PPP and the Awami League is that they have emerged centring on individual personalities. In their absence, the two parties may disintegrate. Already, on December 12, 1970 an alleged attempt was made to assassinate Mr Rahman at the Chittagong Port, in East Pakistan.

A combination of these three major political parties with a balanced and

impartial programme will not only isolate the reactionary elements but also bring back peace and self-confidence in the minds of the masses.

This should happen, because a stable and prosperous Pakistan is essential for the overall progress of the Asian continent.

(Concluded)

Hanoi's Relentlessly Logical War

WE'll do everything in our power to win the war. Not only win it, but win it further, so to speak. We have paid a heavy price for this victory". This was North Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong's reaction (in an interview to Jacques Decornoy of *Le Monde*) to the American air raid of November 21, and renewed strikes north of the demilitarized zone by US aviation.

"You can see the war is still going on". He raised his arms to emphasize his point, then burst out laughing.

"The American air raids? We're used to them." said Mr Dong. "This war is bristling with contradictory situations, for which the Americans must bear the responsibility. In the first place, beginning in 1968, the war was supposed to be 'de-Americanized' and the scale of the fighting reduced.

"But Mr Nixon began to buck the trend. This explains the intervention in Cambodia and the resumption of air raids, which are becoming more and more frequent and have today reached a dangerous intensity. Mr Nixon's purpose was to use the bombardment of North Vietnam to escalate and prolong the war in the hope of reaching an impossible solution.

"There is no such solution. He must reconcile himself to accepting the normal, natural and inevitable conclusion of this war: a halt to the aggression, withdrawal of the troops (this is inevitable, too) and a political solution based on respect for the

national rights of the Vietnamese people.

"As for us, we believe that the war is taking a relentlessly logical course which is admirably suited to our purposes. For years we have devoted our efforts to examining the rationale behind this phenomenon, to studying the inevitability of each of its stages. These studies have served as a basis for our military and political strategy, and in recent years for our diplomatic posture. Hence our plans for a protracted war, and our confidence in a popular struggle.

"We are at home in this logical development because we possess its secret, a secret that Mr Nixon, the White House and the Pentagon will never comprehend. It is a course of action in keeping with the imperatives of contemporary history, which require independence for all peoples. And that is no mere slogan.

Historic Undertaking

"This is the era of weakening imperialism, including US imperialism, and we have a part to play in hastening its decline. It is a role we played in the past, which we will continue to play—and excellently.

"The late President Ho Chi Minh liked to draw the analogy of a fox caught in a trap. He tries to free himself, but in so doing catches a second paw in the trap, and so on.

"These people are sinking deeper into their madness. Mr Nixon inter-

vened in Cambodia, where the war is following its logical course.

"The Americans have been deluding themselves about this war for a long time. The 'pacification' programme that everyone is talking about started well before Mr Nixon came to power. This time the Americans have put out a great deal of energy and huge sums of money to try to make 'pacification' work. They have committed unheard-of outrages and crimes. You cannot imagine the extent of the torture, the crimes, the genocide. But all that Mr Nixon can do is to erect a scaffolding that can be brought down in a single night.

... "What is happening in the cities in South Vietnam is particularly significant. It is no mere accident that the masses have risen up there in the past few years, especially since 1968. They include every section of the population from the working classes, the students, and Buddhist priests to the liberal members of the bourgeoisie, the intellectuals, journalists and some members of parliament. All of these people are fighting for essentially the same thing as the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam.

"It is no accident that there have been exchanges between these two groups. The trend is irreversible. Several more years of fighting on all fronts will be necessary before this movement under way in the cities reaches a culminating point.

"The masses in the cities have risen up against an extremely harsh police regime that moulds the minds of the

people. Two years ago in South Vietnam one had only to talk about peace and neutrality to be sent to prison. Today slogans calling for the formation of a peacetime government and the withdrawal of the US troops can be heard everywhere: in Saigon, Hue and Da Nang.

"If hundreds of thousands of people have decided to come out against the government despite the police, it is because they realize our victory is real. Government officials and army officers of the puppet regime in both Saigon and the provinces understand the eight-point programme presented by the Provisional Revolutionary Government on September 17. They know that it will not be long before the plan is adopted. They realize that the withdrawal of the US troops and the formation of a government of national reconciliation are inevitable.

"... Any elections held in the South while it is under military occupation are bound to be fixed. The 1971 election could have some significance in view of the way the political situation is developing, particularly in the cities. It is this change which is important, the rest is nothing.

"The presidential election could play a part, but an extremely limited part, especially in the context of the movement which is going to sweep everything away. What matters is the people's political movement out of which will emerge a government on which the people can count and with which the Provisional Revolutionary Government can negotiate. If you except a handful of dyed-in-the-wool pro-Americans, the eight points of the Provisional Revolutionary Government are quite acceptable to the South Vietnamese."

Reading Nixon's Mind

Mr Dong was reminded that the American President had talked of withdrawing US troops. In the light of that, what was going to happen? What hope was there of a settlement?

Mr Dong had harsh words for Mr Nixon and for the apologists of his October 7 proposals.

"You speak of US troops being pulled out, but can you credit Mr Nixon with intentions he does not have? He has never laid down a deadline. He does not want a total withdrawal. On several occasions he has indicated that he would leave some troops in Vietnam.

"Nevertheless the pressure of events in South Vietnam, in Indochina, in the United States itself and throughout the world will force him one day to halt the war and withdraw his troops completely and unconditionally. He will have to allow our people in the South to settle their affairs as they wish. One day he will see the light and accept the Provisional Revolutionary Government's eight-point programme, but that day has yet to come.

"The Americas began by waging their 'special war' (war waged with the help of American advisers). Then, with the arrival of US troops in South Vietnam, came the 'local war', and finally the war of destruction against the North.

"A new phase of the war was inaugurated in early 1969 when Mr Nixon introduced his Vietnamization policy, hoping to find a solution to his problems there. But that's not possible, no. We should like to play fair, but Mr Nixon is used to resorting to all sorts of tricks.

"You mentioned his October 7 speech. There should really be no need to take a magnifying glass and try to read between the lines. What is necessary is to find out whether he is truly willing to negotiate at the present time.

"Mr Nixon's 'five-point programme' was intended for the November 3 election, which he lost besides. He may be able to fool voters, but he can't fool us. And now these new bombing raids... No, no. Let's not waste our time wondering what he might have been saying between the lines. We are convinced that the

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S. P. CHATTERJEE

Statesman Office

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Durgapur-4

Provisional Revolutionary Government's eight-point programme is sincere, and on this there can be no question of any concession whatever".

...Following Prince Norodom Sihanouk's overthrow by General Lon Nol in Cambodia, the war must be viewed in the context of the overall situation in Indochina. Mr Dong praised Indochinese solidarity, which has always existed but was solemnly consecrated at the summit conference of the Indochinese people.

"This solidarity, born on the battlefield, was intensely felt by all those who took part in the conference," he continued, "It is shown by the struggle being waged in the name of all the peoples concerned, for their independence, national sovereignty and national interests. These are not empty phrases or fine rhetoric, but an expression of the fundamental aspirations behind our common struggle.

One Solution, Many Facets

"The situation differs from country to country, as do the political programmes. There is the South Vietnamese Provisional Revolutionary Government's eight-point programme, the five points of the Pathet Lao and Prince Sihanouk's five-point declaration. It is true that we are all in a common struggle, but each country seeks a solution in keeping with its national interests as well as the overall interests."

North Vietnam is nursing its wounds, but it may suffer more. How does it view the future? Mr Dong was just back from a tour of one of the provinces. The Hanoi papers were filled with articles and news items on harvests, fertilisers, and ways of saving money.

"We are prepared for any eventuality, but we are also putting all our efforts into rebuilding and developing our economy," the Premier said. "This is absolutely indispensable. Much of the Democratic Republic's strength lies in its economic development. We must strengthen our economy and our military potential if we want to build a solid base" (from *Le Monde*. Abridged).

In Memory Of Stalin

MONI GUHA

STALIN was born 91 years ago, on December 21. He died in 1953, 29 years after the death of Lenin. During these long 29 years Stalin was the undisputed and unquestioned leader of the Soviet Communist Party, the Soviet State and of the international communist movement. But the year 1956 marked a major watershed in the international communist movement and, by its consequences, in world politics. Everybody became "Leninist", shunned the path of "Stalinism" and carefully avoided calling themselves "Stalinists". In the course of the great destalinisation in Europe and America, especially in Eastern Europe "Stalinists" and "Stalinism" became the centre of severe attacks by the "Leninists". Thus a high wall was erected between Stalinism and Leninism.

Curiously enough, in spite of taking "more and more pleasure in the cult of the individual" Stalin never tried to introduce his own "ism" or "thought". He always considered himself "just a pupil of Lenin's and the aim of my life is to be a worthy pupil of his". (Stalin's talk with Emil Ludwig). But the "Leninists" compartmentalised Stalin; a "positive" Stalin up to a certain period and a "negative" Stalin from a specific period "in the latter part of his life". "The negative characteristics of Stalin...transformed themselves during the last years into a grave abuse of power by Stalin which caused untold harm in our party." (emphasis added, Khrushchev's secret report). "During the latter part of his life, Stalin took more and more pleasure in this cult of the individual and violated the party's system of democratic centralism and the principle of combining collective leadership with individual responsibility" ("On the historical experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat" issued by the CPC. Emphasis added.)

It would be appropriate on the occasion of Stalin's 91st birthday to discuss his contributions to the ideological armoury of Marxism-Leninism in his "last years" or the "latter part of his life."

It is said that "Mao Tse-tung Thought is Marxism-Leninism of the era in which imperialism is heading for a total collapse and socialism is advancing to worldwide victory." (Lin Piao's Report to the Ninth National Congress of the Communist Party of China. Emphasis added). But it was Stalin "in the latter part of his life", in February 1952, who defined this era as the era of the total collapse of imperialism. In his "Remarks on economic questions connected with the November 1951 discussion" on the "proposals for the improvement of the draft textbook on political economy" addressed to the "participants in economic discussion," Stalin after elucidating the causes and consequences of the Second World War, said: "This state of affairs has confronted the economists with two questions":

"(a) Can it be affirmed that the thesis expounded by Stalin before the Second World War regarding the relative stability of markets in the period of general crisis of capitalism is still valid?

"(b) Can it be affirmed that the thesis expounded by Lenin in the spring of 1916 namely that 'in spite of the decay of capitalism 'on the whole capitalism is growing far more rapidly than before' is still valid?

"I think that it cannot. In view of the new conditions to which the Second World War has given rise, both these theses must be regarded as having lost their validity."

It is Stalin who defined "Leninism is Marxism in the epoch of imperialism and of the proletarian revolution." That, of course, was also the epoch of the "positive" Stalin. Be-

cause of the emergence of new conditions—the “negative” Stalin felt the necessity of further concretising the epoch of imperialism, when the relative stabilisation and overall growth of capitalism were no longer a reality. He not only concretised the new epoch, but also concretised and developed the “basic economic law of modern capitalism.” Marx discovered the secret of capitalist development, its fundamental contradiction, the cause of its periodic crises and the forces leading to its inevitable destruction with his law of surplus value. “But the law of surplus value” said Stalin, “is too general a law, it does not cover the problem of the *highest rate of profit*, the securing of which is a condition for the development of monopoly capitalism. In order to fill this hiatus the law of surplus value must be made more concrete and *developed further in adaptation to the conditions of monopoly capitalism* at the same time bearing in mind that monopoly capitalism demands not any sort of profit but precisely the *maximum profit*. That will be the basic economic law of capitalism.” (“Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR.” Emphasis added).

“Super-profits” arising from exploitation of colonial and semi-colonial countries, wrote Lenin in *Imperialism*, “are obtained over and above the profits which capitalists squeeze out of workers of their ‘home’ country.” But profits secured from foreign countries are not confined today to the “super-profits” realised from colonial and semi-colonial countries. Monopoly exploitation now includes, wrote Stalin, “the conversion of a number of independent countries into dependent countries.” “No, (it is not the average rate of profit, nor yet super-profit, which as a rule represents only a *slight addition* to the average profit, but precisely the *maximum profit* that is the motor of monopoly capitalism”, said Stalin (emphasis added).

How does monopoly obtain maximum profit? Stalin categorised three ways: (1) through the exploi-

tation, ruin and impoverishment of the majority of the population of the given country; (2) through the enslavement and systematic robbery of the people of other countries, especially backward countries; and (3) through wars and militarisation of the national economy. Apparently it would appear that there is nothing new in this formulation. Yet it is a brilliant and masterly development of Marxian economic theory which set the guideline in elucidating and explaining the present-day economic policy of neo-colonialism. As this article is not an economic dissertation, the author will not go deep into the matter, but just point out that economic aggression holds an important place in the neo-colonial policy by which maximum profit is realised today. The means are penetration or outright taking over of capital investment; exportation of loan capital where direct penetration is difficult for one reason or another; domination of foreign trade so that prices of import and export can be dictated; outright crippling or destruction of rival industries; control of fiscal policy through terms of government loans; “technical agreements” which are in the nature of non-financial investment but which assure the monopolies high profits in the shape of patent payments; “aid” to seize the natural resources of the underdeveloped countries and non-equivalent exchanges etc. Over and above these, the imperialists not only turn other countries into their military bases utilising their “military aid” as a bait, but also force them to appropriate huge funds, several times larger than the volume of “aid”, for military expenditure, thus plunging their economies into the abyss of ruin. How brilliantly Stalin explained the phenomenon! It is precisely the necessity of securing maximum profit that drives monopoly capitalism to such risky undertakings as the enslavement and systematic plunder of colonies and other backward countries, the conversion of a number of independent countries into dependent countries, the organisation of new

wars which to the magnates of modern capitalism is the “business” best adapted to the extraction of the maximum profit, and lastly attempts to win world supremacy.

It is impossible to understand present day neo-colonialism without understanding and grasping Stalin’s law of maximum profit. Neo-colonialism cannot be understood by rhetoric alone. One cannot reach Marxism-Leninism except via Stalin and Stalinism. There lies the historic necessity of resurrecting Stalin.

Hadrian VII

BY A DRAMA CRITIC

PETER Luke’s *Hadrian VII*, presented last week at Kala Mandir by The Amateurs, was an excellent production. The play is an adaptation of the fantasy-autobiography of Frederick William Rolfe, also known as Baron Corvo, written in the early years of the century. Rolfe is a bitter and frustrated man because he has been denied priesthood by the Catholic Church for his allegedly having no vocation. Twenty years of denial drives him to desperate means to eke out a pittance. Unable to find acceptance within the precincts of the Church, Rolfe has his vindication in fantasy, ‘romance’ as Rolfe called it, with a vengeance when he promotes himself to the position of the highest Pontiff.

Rolfe is turned into a recluse and is very sick and tired but he has been forced into it. In the fantasy part of the play he, however, looks intensely human and seems bent upon undoing all the wrongs perpetrated by the Church, even by divesting itself of some traditional powers enjoyed by it. This is all very sardonic and the vituperative outpourings of a tormented man are reflected in eccentric sarcasm in the dialogue which is a very strong element in the play. Acting credit in the production was almost evenly shared. Vimal Bhagat as the protagonist ac-

quits himself exceedingly well. He uttered his lines with poise and showed a measure of confidence in a demanding role. Zahid Baig in his dual role as one of the bailiffs and the Cardinal Archbishop was also a good performer. The production, a faithful rendering of the play, captured the pomp and pageantry that went with the ways of the Vatican and this part of the play had an edge over the more austere scenes at the beginning and the end.

The Nickelodeon Era

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

IT is almost true that America was the midwife of the movies and the early pioneers there tried to explore the manifold possibilities of the medium. A flashback into that exciting past would always be of immense value to the students of cinema. Recently some of the very early films, the small bits from the peep-show age were shown here as a prelude to the fortnight-long festival of silent American films which started this week. The films in the programme were of a varied nature; the early pieces were mainly newsreel records, comic bits and extracts from the three plays; the three feature items were Edwin S. Porter's *The Life of an American Fireman* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Thomas Ince's *The Last of the Line*. The newsreel films like *New York Street Scenes* and *The Black Diamond Express* were photographed with a keen eye on authentic details and the films on President McKinley's tour and Admiral Dewy's visit to the navy are beautiful examples of early political documentation. Some films are pure fun, maybe the first stirrings of the slapstick tradition. *Fun in a Chinese Laundry* centres round a chase and is known to have been shot on the first mobile studio-set. *A Wringing Good Joke* is about the puckish pranks of a boy upsetting the routine life. An ordinary day-to-

day thing like the washing of a baby acquires a kind of tender intimacy in Edison's film and as the Negro nurse stares smilingly at the camera, the thrill and charm of it all comes back to us. *The Kiss*, an excerpt from a play, is one of the screen's earliest and boldest close-ups. Some of these films have a peculiar effect, perhaps not intended but which has somehow got into them. In *Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots*, as the axe chops off the queen's head and the body falls to the ground like a wax dummy, we do not feel any horror, what follows instead is a healthy guffaw. Similarly, in the *Burning Stable* when the horses trot off in slow motion amid smoke and flames, the whole screen becomes a vivid image of surrealist poetry. Dickson's film on the violin players is the first example of synchronising music with the visuals, although the print shown is without the recording. In *Fatima*, the camera captures the rhythmic movements of the belly-dance and in the censored version of the same film she appears with two strips running along the middle and lower parts of the frame covering the objectionable portions of the dancer's anatomy. The last item in these pioneering ventures is an advertising film on Dewar's Scotch Whisky featuring a Highlander dance. A little crude, perhaps, but it's only the beginning and it's Scotch!

Among the story films, Edwin S. Porter's study on an American fireman displays acute observation and a feeling for pace. The scenes showing the fire brigades running and the rescue operations have been masterly staged. But Porter's other film *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is not very impressive. It is a curious mixture of operatic acting, slapstick movements and some cheap theatrical tricks and this pot-pourrie remains too clumsy and archaic to have any appeal for us, although it is equally true that these films are historically very much important as indicators of the cinema's groping for a style. Thomas Ince's *The Last of the Line* shows the clash of values between Gray

Otter, the Indian chief with his old, traditional moorings and his son Tiah, a corrupt youth with modern education. Ince's camera goes into the Red Indian territory, into the mountains, streams and the nomadic tents and picks out the visual details with confidence. The incidents and the characters are boldly sketched out and the cinematic devices are used with dramatic effect.

A Late Appreciation

BY A DANCE CRITIC

IT was on such a winter evening in the early fifties when this scribe first saw Yamini Krishnamurty, still in her teens, talking and exchanging *namaskaram* with the few connoisseurs of this city who could spare the time to see the thinly-attended *debut* of an unknown dancer from the South. A subcutaneous current of dejection under her superficially apparent smile was not hard to discern. What marred her maiden appearance that evening at the New Empire was neither lack of beauty nor dexterity of her *mudras* and movements but sheer ill luck. Those were the last days of the old masters. The Shankars, although setting stars then, used to draw a full house in their annual winter appearances; Rukmini Devi, Balasaraswati, Ramgopal, Sadhana Bose, etc were still favourites of the box-office. Even a hybrid programme of Vijayantimala was oversubscribed. So-called popularity and publicity were, as always have been, the determining factors of success of a performing art.

But there are some hard nuts whose spirit is difficult to dampen even in spite of initial failure. Yamini Krishnamurty is such an artiste whose dedicated application to her art turned the tide during the following years in her favour, so much so as to make her the prima ballerina of Bharatnatyam in not only the national but also the international arena. A true disciple of Rukmini Devi's Ins-

titude, the Kalakshetra, she has perfected not only the classical styles of South Indian dance but also the local folk forms of Kuchipudi and Odishi.

Yamini initiated her programme presented by the Nari Seva Sangha recently at the Rabindra Sadan with a *tillana* in raga *Natya Bhairavi* (North Indian Ashabari: wrongly reported by *The Statesman* as Chandra-kosha) in *Adi tala* in which variations of tempo and movement were accomplished with felicity and suppleness. It was rather unusual because *tillana* generally forms the concluding number in a South Indian dance programme.

The *Shabdham* in *Ragamalika* in *Adi Tala* (Tin Tal of North India) by Nandini, the teen-ager sister and disciple of Yamini, although not as masterful as her preceptor-sister's, was well compensated by her adolescent charm. Her *Kurathi*, a Gypsy dance of South India, was fairly performed, but can hardly be said to be a happy selection for a *solo number*.

Yamini's *Varnam*, composed by herself in praise of the presiding deity of Tanjore, in *Hanumat Todi* (our *Bhairavi*) in *Rupaka Tala* of four-two time beats displaying the sentiments of devotion and surrender, was the finest number performed by her that evening. Some of her movements were extremely stauquesque. The *Krishna-Shabda* in *Mohana* (our *Bhupali*) in *Adi Tala* presented in the *Kuchipudi* style bears striking resemblance to the *Gat Bhava* of *Katthak* wherein the dancer is assigned the multiple roles of *Yashoda*, *Krishna*, *Radha* and the *Gopis*. The various emotions of *shringara* (the erotic), *karuna* (the pathetic), *hasya* (the comic) etc. and the dramatic potentials whatever there were, lost their significance and poignance owing to lack of a suitably comprehensive form to integrate them in an artistic frame. As a result, the dramatic potential of such dances (both of the South and the North) is usually reduced to mere pantomime in the name of *Abhinaya*. It is neither pure dance nor dramatic ballet but a traditional and formalistic

hotch-potch of both. These potentially dramatic emotions and expressions, referred to again and again by Mr Krishnamurty, Yamini's learned father, could be given full play and shape only through a dramatic form and content.

Mention must be made of the wonderfully sonorous singing of *Shyamala Swami*. *Mridanga* and violin accompaniments were ably provided by *T. S. Subrahmanian* and *P. Swaminathan*. This critic can scarcely stand the primitive percussion instrument of the South, the *Ghatam*, which is invariably present in all such performances.

Clippings

Exiles' Challenge

THE impending establishment of full diplomatic relations between Madrid and a number of east European countries has brought the strained links between the exile Spanish Communist Party and the Soviet Union near breaking point.

...The Soviet Government... has been showing great interest in links with Spain... the clash of national interests between the Soviet Union and the reformist Spanish Communist Party, headed by *Senor Santiago Carillo*, the Secretary general, and *Senora Dolores Ibarruri*, the famous *La Passionaria* of the Civil War, has developed into a major scandal deepening the rift in the international communist movement.

Another issue exacerbating relations between the two fraternal parties is the Soviet-led invasion of *Czechoslovakia*.

...Two Central Committee members living in Russia, *Senor Eduardo Garcia* and *Senor Augustin Gomez*, refused to accept the Spanish Party's stand on *Czechoslovakia* and began a harsh campaign to discredit the *Santiago-Ibarruri* leadership. The Spanish party organization of exiles

living in the Soviet Union, unexpectedly denounced the "dividing and splitting activities" of the two Soviet-backed Central Committee members.

...The Spanish party presidium expelled the pair from the Central Committee and, when earlier this year they continued their pro-Soviet splitting activities, they were also expelled from the ranks of the party.

...The Spanish Communist Party has now taken a most momentous step in the defence of its independent line against Soviet encroachment by seeking a rapprochement with China. The autumn plenum declared: "The Spanish Communist Party is making the necessary efforts to normalize its relations with the Chinese Communist Party. In doing so, we are convinced that we are serving the cause of the Spanish Revolution in the interests of world revolution and those of the international working class movement by contributing to its unity." (*The Times*).

Terrorists and Torturers

"One can describe the kidnappers (of *Her Beihl*, the German Consul in San Sebastian, Spain) as thugs and terrorists," a Basque priest told his parishioners... but words fail to describe men who torture prisoners, record their screams, play the recordings to wives and mothers and tell the distracted women that they must become informers if they wish to save their loved ones"—a clear reference to the murdered police chief (of the secret police in San Sebastian by a member of the Basque extremist group, *ETA* in 1968).—[*The Times*]

Now, Delhi Naxalites

More than two dozen raids on the

For Frontier contact

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homes of students and lecturers of Delhi University, trade union members, a doctor, a lawyer and others were carried here in the last fortnight following intelligence reports of a Naxalite plan for large-scale attacks in the Capital.

Tight-lipped police officers refused to disclose the number of arrests made or the nature of the seizures, if any. The raids were, and are being, carried out by a special unit.

The police, it is learnt, were whipped into activity after some Delhi youth, who had been dismissed as "verbal" Naxalites, were found taking part in Naxalite acts in Calcutta and along the Bengal-Bihar border.

Over the last six months, the police have noticed an "alarming increase" in the number of identifiable Naxalites in the Capital. The number according to the records, has risen from 40 to 150. This includes only those who attend the not-so-secret extremist study classes or academic group meetings.

Among those suspected by the police, there has been an increase in the number from professional classes like lawyers. What is more the num-

ber of young workers, especially in the textile mills belt in Old Delhi has shown a marked increase.

Delhi is on the Naxalite map, according to some sources. It is the ideological training centre for large tracts of Northern India. It also has the reputation in Naxalite circles of being the safest meeting place. (*Hindustan Times*, December 15, 1970).

"We Value our Lives"

...When a suggestion was made that the (Avro) aircraft be tested by an independent agency, other than the Indian Manufacturers of this aircraft the Chairman of Indian Airlines said that no self-respecting country could stand for this, and to boot called the pilots unpatriotic. We would like to know what our Chairman was doing during the Indo-China (sic) crisis when our pilots flew round the clock, at time 7 days in a row and many a time without food. We did carry tremendous overloads, knowing fully well that there would be no escape in case of engine failure, because it had to be done in the interest of our country. We do not consider that our Chairman is qualified to comment on our patriotism.

Even on this issue the Management seem to have changed their stand. Because we read a few days later that the Indian Airlines were considering calling in the Hawker Sidley test pilots.

In conclusion we entirely agree that our motives are utterly selfish; we value our lives, and would like to hang on to it a little longer.

We do not have the lakhs of tax payers money which is available to Indian Airlines to carry on their campaign of vilification against us, but should any person be interested in sorting out the facts behind this sordid affair, we would be only too happy to give it to them at the local Indian Commercial Pilots Association's office.

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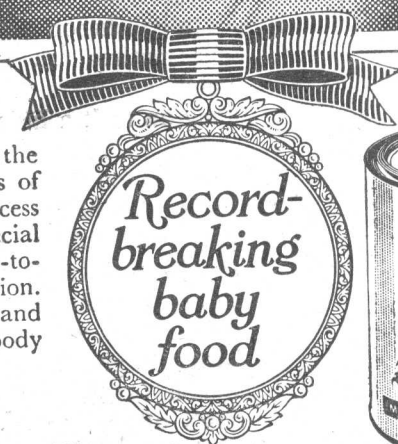
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Letters

'The Hard, Long Way'

Recently, two excellent articles have appeared in *Frontier*. One was *Fanshen*, by M. S., (October 3) and the other was *Armed Struggle in America* by N. K. Kalam (December 5). It is high time we paid attention to what both these articles reveal.

Namely: That all revolutionary struggles which are not scientifically organised on Marxist-Leninist lines will lapse into chaos, adventurism and defeat. To be able to *fanshen* we must first be very clear about our aims and objectives. Mao Tsetung's programme for agrarian revolution, the Black Panther's, programme for armed self-defence, consolidation and liberation, are marked by a cool-headed ability to utilise all resources open to the revolutionaries to advance their struggle, extend their mass support, and create a mass base. Uncompromising in principle, flexible in tactics: this is the way.

Thus, the agrarian revolution in China was basically conceived to solve the agrarian problem on the basis of *Land to the Tiller*. This was a systematic, step by step programme, within the framework of the New Democratic Revolution. Peasant leagues (consisting in the main of poor and landless peasants) were formed to struggle against unfair rents, fines, interest and taxes. This led to the better organised and consolidated Peasant Associations, which launched struggles to confiscate the excess land of the landlords, and to set up alternative organs of political, military and socio-judicial power. Peoples' militias were formed to defend and safeguard these struggles, and guerilla squads created as a mobile and fluid form of harassment to the enemy troops, and also to spread the struggle to other areas. Guerilla warfare is an indispensable but relatively low form of military struggle, according to Chairman Mao. It reflects the early stages of the revolutionary struggle, when the organised strength of the people is weak,

and the balance of forces favours the bourgeoisie.

It was a consistent Maoist tactic to *remould* rather than behead class enemies; whether these were landlords, bureaucrats or Japanese prisoners of war. Unite with the many, isolate the few diehards and rout them thoroughly. Single out the main enemy and concentrate all your forces to annihilate him. The urban proletariat, the poor and landless peasants, the middle and rich peasants, the small and middle landlords, the urban petty bourgeoisie, the national bourgeoisie; all these classes were to be won over in the struggle against the big landlords, the comprador bureaucrats and the forces of Imperialism. This was the New Democratic Revolution: an alliance of four classes basically, fighting against feudalism and Imperialism.

Who doesn't know all this?

Then why the ideological mess we're in? Why "annihilation", "actions", "cultural revolutions", "boycott mass organisations"... Why this mad line of calling vengeance and bloodshed on the heads of unarmed villagers, unorganised, unled—by the "actions" of 7-or 8-member guerilla squads, who stick a landlord's head upon a pole and run on to the next village? Surely we don't want to *provoke* repression, as Comrade K. Narayan has pointed out in his very timely letter to *Frontier*? Are we saying that the repressive forces of the bourgeois state will only act when we commit murder? That all other forms of mass struggle will only result in compromise? Are we not exposing then our mistrust of ourselves as revolutionaries, our mistrust of the people as a mere "mob", and finally, our distrust of the historic practice of Marxism-Leninism in the Great October Revolution and the Great Chinese Revolution? What are we trying to prove? There have been plenty of romantic revolutionaries before us. We are not new. The Narodniks, Robin Hood, Man Singh, Che—but we call ourselves Marxist-Leninists.

What are we trying to avoid? Hard

work? The "immensity of our task", as Lenin called it? Are we trying to cut corners? Have we no patience, when all we want is "actions"? Is this our only answer to twenty years of creeping revisionism? So we swing to the other extreme. Denounce all work, all organisation of the masses, all possibility of legitimate action as counter-revolutionary and revisionist.

Any serious revolutionary organisation would welcome and be quick to utilise whatever bourgeois freedoms remain open to it, especially when it is still weak. The Black Panther Party, please note, "stress two things about armed self-defence; first, that they operate *within the gun law* and their *constitutional right to bear arms*, and second, that the arms are to serve a *political purpose* and should not be viewed solely as a military weapon". This has been a hard lesson learned from the first romantic excesses of the movement.

Moreover: "The Panthers' most notable achievements lie in their programmes to serve the black community—free breakfast for children, free 'liberation schools' for adult and young blacks where they are taught socialist and black history and culture, free health clinics, legal assistance centres etc. All of this brought the Panthers sympathy from the Black people". Note: this is all legal, above-ground activity. Bound to end in revisionism?

And this is precisely Mao Tsetung's point too. If we can show the masses of the people that our struggle is based on just, reasonable, rational demands, we will win the enthusiastic support of the vast majority. Otherwise, if we are unnecessarily bloody, hasty, and arrogant, we will only alienate the masses and become isolated from them.

Comrades, it is time to reconsider our course. Let us unite, organise ourselves into steeled revolutionaries and go to work amongst the peasants and workers with a rational programme. Let us seize the tremendous revolutionary potential in our country today and lead it on a

Marxist-Leninist course to victory, not helter-skelter into anarchy and counter-revolution.

ABC
Bombay

The Kind Birlas

Mr B. M. Birla has now made a statement about creating job opportunities in West Bengal and giving preference to Bengali youth. The most ironical part of it is that all Birla head offices in Calcutta and five factories under their management in West Bengal are closed. Thousands of workers have been thrown out of employment and forced to face starvation so that the Birlas can deny them their elementary trade union rights or pass over the burden of the economic crisis to their shoulders. Hence these utterances and the wide publicity given to them by All India Radio and the press are a game to turn the wrath of the unemployed into provincial frenzy which, much to the dislike of the ruling class, is not present in West Bengal.

If Mr B. M. Birla is so sincere, should he not open all the closed Birla offices and factories immediately?

RAJEN CHATTERJEE
General Secretary,

Birla Brothers and the Allied
Concerns Employees' Union, Calcutta

'Idle Tears'

Apropos "One November Night in Beliaghata" (December 12) history shows that whenever one class tries to overthrow the ruling class and its government the ruling class unleashes all forms of repression but in the long run digs its own grave. The more it relies upon the repressive state machinery the more it becomes isolated from the masses and it invite its own downfall. This is the lesson of history. How many can the Government kill, cripple or jail? Thousands and thou-

sands of men are ready to take up the challenge of the ruling class. There is no force in the world that can resist the march of these men who know that the future is theirs.

But what seems a mockery is the manner in which the Marxists sometimes shed tears at the murder of Naxalites. Marxists declare that the Naxalites are in collusion with the police and the government to kill Marxist leaders and cadres. Sometimes back Mr Promode Das Gupta wondered whether the CRP bullets were wearing NIRODH.

SABYASACHI SEN
Howrah

Interview

Apropos Amitabha Dasgupta's letter on *Interview* (December 12), in art, in films too, reality does never mean presentation of the real as it is. We live in reality but in our daily life it seldom strikes our imagination while the same reality when presented in art at once touches our imagination and reveals something underlying the surface, a deeper truth. The task of a film critic is, therefore, to evaluate the content and then to judge the form to see how far it has succeeded in unveiling the truth that the content is intended to present.

Let us begin from the beginning. Mrinal Sen has taken up Calcutta 1970 as the crucible of reality. It is Calcutta, that constitutes the central theme of the drama whereas Ranjit is an element turned this way and that to produce the desired effect. Like most of his tribe he indulges in day dreaming of a bright future in the establishment without ever suspecting his competence as a marketable commodity to the agents of the ruling class.

The suit episode constitutes the structure of the story. It has been purposefully woven with all its improbabilities, if any, to fathom the mind of the hero—his silly eagerness to make himself marketable, to the establishment. Ranjit's unusual faith

in 'showing up' had to be emphasised, exaggerated, so to say, to elevate the story from the superficial to the higher plane of reality. The purpose of the film is not to preach violence or revolution as Mr Dasgupta seems to have expected, but to expose the complete hollowness of our society and civilisation.

It is, therefore, silly to ask how far the suit is obligatory for an interview today and almost childish to suggest an alternative. King Lear distributed his kingdom among his daughters for reasons nobody knows but an improbable act as such has been permitted in art, in great art indeed, and who dares to suggest an alternative but a fool? Mr. Dasgupta has however gone far to challenge the forgetfulness of Ranjit. Only a bit of text book knowledge in psychology would have prevented him from doing so. Such sudden and complete forgetfulness is very probable because of the pick-pocket incident and psychologically owing to the humiliation that Ranjit had to undergo, silently, to procure the suit.

Lastly, Mr Dasgupta seems to have totally failed to interpret the final scene and has been swayed by the apparent improbability of the action. Thank god he has not asked how Ranjit could go to Park Street so late in the night or why he was not arrested. Whether the Ranjits actually do what the hero has done is immaterial. After the turmoil the Ranjits should feel like doing it—it is a revelation, an awakening of consciousness about the world around. And again in this very scene the voice of the artist becomes clearly audible.

The film begins with the removal of the statues and ends with the unmasking of the tailor's dummy to tell the truth that in the meantime another set of statues, more alien in their deceptive appearance, have been erected. In 1947 we were so completely deceived that our younger generation may still be lured to dream of a bright future but reality today has become so overwhelming that such dreams are bound to be blown off. Madness, though repulsive to

refined sentiments, is perhaps the only term that somewhat explains our life in Calcutta today, and the high speed coupled with the broken shots of Calcutta life in the film brings the city throbbing and perspiring to the audience, a rare thing in Indian films, for which Mrinal Sen must be appreciated.

KUSHAL SEN
Calcutta

I am among those who have taken their hats off to Mrinal Sen for his *Interview*. In our film world his achievement calls comparison with some of the daringly experimental foreign films. Indeed, he seems to have achieved in the sphere of cinematic art what Manik Banerjee, the distinguished Bengali novelist, achieved in the sphere of literature and what Tagore could not, despite his greatness. Mrinal Sen's achievement is decidedly something that should be envied by all thinking persons seriously associated with our film world. His film should give rise to some healthy jealousy. My conviction is it has done so.

JOYTIRMOY GANGULI
Calcutta

There is no basis of comparing *Pratidwandi* and *Interview*. *Pratidwandi* reflects the wavering mind of a director who is lagging behind the progressive masses and is deliberately coming in their way. *Interview* on the other hand is the reflection of the progressive mind in our country. *Pratidwandi* poses a problem and a personal solution. *Interview* poses a problem but a general and a progressive solution.

Interview is remarkably a clean and simple movie that can be under-

stood by all, unlike *Pratidwandi*. Mrinal Sen took great pains to make his film simple, so that many can understand the concepts. It could have been made simpler. This is what I call serving the people, the essence of proletarian ideology. Incidentally, in this movie the main concept is revolutionary politics.

Of all things, Mrinal Sen has accepted that proletarian ideology comes first and that all activities, artistic, scientific, have to be guided by proletarian ideology. *Interview*, undoubtedly is the first proletarian movie in the history of the Indian cinema. The artist, the director, Mrinal Sen has just started an approach to serve the masses. Hope he will always continue this mass line.

DEBABRATA K. ROY
Calcutta

Some of us were amazed by the review of *Interview* you published in your paper (November 14). We were not bothered by what we thought the atrocious form of the film, film appreciation being largely a matter of taste and opinion. But can there be two opinions about the reactionary political content of the film? We are using the word reactionary in quite a guarded way.

Allow us to describe the film schematically. It starts with removal of some imperial statues, ends with stripping of a European dummy and in between gives out a story in which a middle-class urban Bengali youth fails to get a job because he does not wear a suit.

We are quite aware that the director has taken pains to show that the youth lost the job not because of a couple of accidents but because of a rotten system. And therefore we don't object to the conclusion of the film even though some others felt that it would have had a different ending if there were not the avoidable accidents. But our objections are on a different line.

Let us translate the film in political language. The director says that

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India is now not a colony (removal of imperial statues) but a neo-colony (stress on the European dress). The petty-bourgeois youth was forced to revolt because the contradictions of capitalism (laundry strike) give him no chance to climb up the social ladder and because petty-bourgeois idealism (catching a pick-pocket at the sacrifice of his suit) leads him to side with the common man.

So far all right. This is very good material to depict the economic frustrations of the petty-bourgeois. But what are the conclusions drawn from this material?

The dummy, the symbol of neo-colonialism, is stripped and shown emasculated. By whom? By an urban youth, who does not represent either workers or peasants, who is not even a student or guerilla fighter, who has no political bearings, who is seen all along in his relationships with his family, friends and an interview board, who does not think or act politically until the moment he realises that he is rejected by a bourgeois society.

Are we to understand that neo-imperialism can be destroyed by such stuff? Are we to understand that the present struggle going on in India against neo-imperialism is being conducted by such youths? If not, what was the significance of the Vietnam shots and emasculation of neo-imperialism? To lump the economic frustrations of the hero with the UF struggles in West Bengal (protest marches, strikes, baton-charges by the police, the hero's proof-reading) is one thing. The director may think that there is no difference bet-

ween the revolt of the middle class and the revolt of the UF parties, both being economic in nature. But how does he bring in Vietnam in the same breath? Either the director does not understand the difference between economic and political fights, between trade union struggle and liberation war or he purposely lumps them all together. Either he is confused or he is reactionary.

The hero of the film is never shown as a political man. Hence his revolt must be considered spontaneous. Are we again to understand that spontaneous struggles, devoid of political orientation, can destroy neo-imperialism? Are we to understand that the present struggles of the Bengali youth are spontaneous, economic and devoid of political ideology? If not, can you call the film progressive, left and contemporary? If not, don't you think that the film distorts the nature of the present struggle and therefore has a reactionary character?

As a matter of fact, the film depicts what can be called bourgeois protest. The hero does not get a job and so rebels. This is in essence bourgeois revolt, as it is being done in America and Europe now. This is temporary with inconsequential values, dress and all that, keeping the capitalist structure intact. The hero of the film does not represent left revolt. Hence the irrelevance of Vietnam and possibly leftist protest marches too. But the director has shown no sign that he knows the difference and if he does, he has mischievous ideas in showing them at one level. Is he confused or reactionary? The film could have been acceptable if it had no overt political message. But the director has one idea in mind, to preach revolution. And what kind of a revolution!

Politically speaking, *Pratidwandi* and *Interview* are of the same class, portraying bourgeois revolt. Was your reviewer swayed by leftist shots in the latter? If not, would he speak up where we misunderstand the latter film?

HARADHAN GUIN AND OTHERS
Calcutta

On Education

After reading Arun Sanyal's letter in *Frontier* (November 21) I thought perhaps he was right in saying that destroying schools and colleges and stopping examinations differed very little from what the Brahmins had done in the past to monopolise to themselves the knowledge of the Shastras and thereby exploit the rest. But men live to learn and this I realised a little later when my attention was attracted by a discourse on the same subject in the Calcutta Diary. The diarist contends the statement of politicians that illiteracy serves the cause of vested interests. No, history is replete with instances of the illiterate and at least the semi-literate waging war against vested interests. A very interesting argument against education or book learning is that "the people who advise the moneybags to cut the workers' pockets and who latch on the workers' movements are all educated men".

The diary concludes with the sordid tale of exploitation of the parents by the teachers through examinations which help the teachers thrive at the cost of the parents. So the most effective remedy we are asked to achieve is to abolish the hateful examinations and thereby herald the dawn of a revolution in education. I failed to understand even with the help of the new and novel ideas revealed in the diary why the destruction of educational institutions and abolition of examinations are being given precedence over a revolution in education. And at last I concluded—blessed indeed are the ignorant.

SOMNATH BHATTACHARYYA
Santragachi, Howrah

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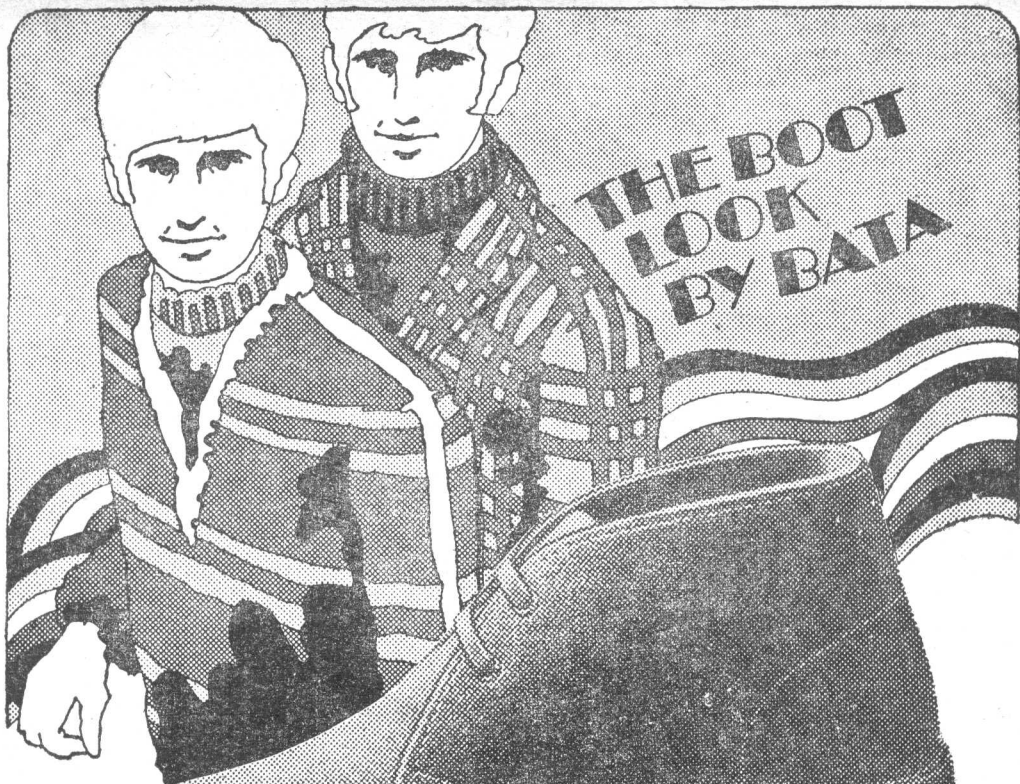
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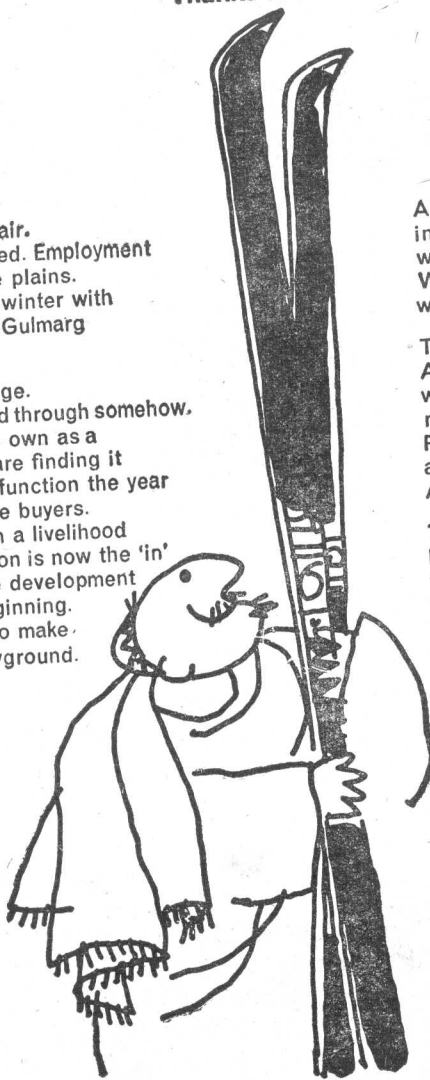
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