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THE DACCA TALKS

THE course of events in East Pakistan is yet uncertain. The negotiations in Dacca are continuing with quite a number of West Pakistan politicians joining in. Even Mr Bhutto, who has been more fickle than a female in his actions and statements, has relented, following clarifications from President Yahya Khan. The Dacca discussions, it can be presumed, centre on the four demands of the Awami League, the four preconditions for its participation in the National Assembly which was summoned to meet on March 25. The main point at issue is the transfer of power to elected representatives of the people. Whether this can be fitted into the Martial Law Administration must be the subject of prolonged debate.

Meanwhile troops are not yet in barracks, they can be seen in bazaars, with a hungry look; the official enquiry into army killings has not been accepted by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman; he has set up another enquiry body. Two of the four demands of the Awami League are thus unconceded, at the time of writing.

The civilian administration is still controlled by the party, in itself a unique achievement. However, the military build-up goes on, thanks to the alleged facilities offered at the British base on Gan in the Maldives—it pays to be a member of Seato. This, it appears, was taxing the patience of the revolutionary populace. On Friday, they tried to stop troop movements by stalling a train near Dacca. The army says they tried to snatch arms from a military vehicle which was being sent to Mymensingh. In the firing thirty people were killed and scores wounded. The Sheikh threatened to boycott the negotiations, but did not do so on being assured by the President that he would look into the matter. Negotiations with the highest authority have a moderating momentum of their own, the more so when the set-up of Pakistan is at stake.

How long will Mujib be able to ride the tiger? The response he has had is spectacular; the unity of the people is almost mythical. And so far Mujib has played his hand very well and is likely to win the first round. What his role will be in the future is another matter. But there is one thing about the movements that have swept Pakistan in the past few years: they have been political in nature to begin with, later incorporating the economic demands of the toilers. Pakistani rulers, under

American advice, were not shrewd enough to exploit the diversionary possibilities of parliamentary politics. They did not utilise this supreme safety valve. That is why the political outbursts in Pakistan have been explosive in nature and effect. And that is why the politics of Bangla Desh, at the moment dominated by bourgeois nationalists, is unlikely to follow set patterns, even if there is a stop-gap settlement and the National Assembly meets.

In West Bengal and elsewhere, the Awami League has millions of admirers. Even politicians who fume when the right of self-determination is mentioned have turned pro-Mujib; even inveterate Muslim baiters and bootlickers of the Free World swear by Mujib. The feeling of fraternity of the non-political people is understandable. It is taken for granted that the Sheikh in power would mean better relations with the Government of India. There is no denying that over the years the East Pakistanis, in their struggle for cultural, social and economic survival, have shed their post-partition hatred of anything Indian. There has been no communal rioting, despite the gravest provocation in India. But even now, under the tidal wave that is sweeping East Pakistan, there are currents of doubt about friendlier relations with the Government of India and there is stress on one aspect that has been lost sight of even by the majority Awami League: Pakistan's relations with India are bound to affect, as a Dacca weekly pointed out before the storm broke on March 2, her foreign relations, particularly her relations with China. There should be no illusions, it said, about the nature of the regime in New Delhi and the nature of the Indian ruling class—the clients or servitors of the USA and the USSR. The two super-powers and India stand for the status quo, gradualism, reforms through constitutional means and against any kind of social and political radicalism. Should East Pakistan, under Mujib, continue to be a satellite of the West? On our part friendliness of the people

towards East Pakistan can be fruitful only if we can set our own house in order—or pull it down altogether to make a clean start. Of that there is no sign.

On The Run

The only occasion on which the South Vietnamese show some speed is while on retreat. At least that has been the bitter conclusion of their American masters. Even that redoubtable quality seems to be missing this time. The elite South Vietnamese Ranger and paratrooper battalions who were airlifted into Laos with the high ambition of choking off the Ho Chi Minh trail are fleeing in panic. For the fortunate few, wounded or posing to be, who could clamber into an evacuation helicopter the flight was a quick, one-shot affair. But for those fleeing on foot the pace is excruciatingly slow. Blundering into one ambush after another and encircled by the Pathet Lao fighters, the South Vietnamese battalions might not finally be left with anyone able to move, however slowly. At least the Pathet Lao high command instructed its troops to make sure exactly that. "The enemy is in complete disarray, and is seeking to withdraw. Let all comrades", the instruction said, "seize this occasion to annihilate the enemy completely. Encircle him, prevent the withdrawal."

According to press reports, the American command in Saigon has finally decided to call off the Laos invasion and pull back the troops. But the South Vietnamese troops who, according to Nixon, have given "an even better account of themselves than the North Vietnamese units" took to the heels quite long before the American decision, thus furnishing another proof of their agility—yet another "ahead of schedule" success! While announcing this decision to abandon the Laotian venture the American bosses have warned against taking it as a sign of failure. The

move, in fact, they claim is highly successful insofar as it has produced heavy "North Vietnamese casualties", the ratio to South Vietnamese losses being 10:1. Among other "successes" scored by the invasion is the time it has bought for Cambodia's fledgeling army. If the communist offensive now under way in Cambodia does not show the respite that is supposed to have been brought to the country that is because it is too early to expect results to reveal themselves. The success of the Laotian venture, Defence Secretary Laird asserted, would best be judged in September and October when the North Vietnamese would face difficulties in sustaining their operations in Cambodia and South Vietnam. Until then, when Laos would no more be in the proverbially short public memory, the critics had better hold their nasty tongue.

Despite Washington's comic effort at obfuscating the real issues at stake it is perhaps a bit too early to forget the justifications originally dished out when the Americans and the South Vietnamese took a plunge into Laos in early February. "Operation Dewey Canyon II" was conceived as a Laotian counterpart of "Operation Total Victory" launched against Cambodia last April—a bid to destroy the "sanctuary" and supply bases of the Indochinese liberation fighters. In Laos it was especially aimed at cutting off the so-called Ho Chi Minh trail. A few days after the invasion began the South Vietnamese commander in charge of the operation, General Hoang Kuan Lam, claimed to be sitting right on the Ho Chi Minh trail and strangling it. But soon they had to flee pell mell before the Pathet Lao onslaught. Early this month the Americans made a second desperate bid to capture the Ho Chi Minh trail complex, resulting in the dismal rout now in progress. Laird says that the South Vietnamese troops were not sent there to stay. True, but they were asked to stay until the beginning of the monsoon to wipe out communist supply depots and ammunition dumps—a task

they almost forgot in the heat of flight. The amount of arms captured or destroyed in Laos, on the Pentagon's admission, has been, if anything, insignificant. And for this they had to pay an enormously heavy price in terms of helicopters and elite South Vietnamese troops—the backbone of a “vietnamized” war. No wonder the Americans would now trot out ridiculous justifications like destruction of North Vietnamese troops (a claim that in any case cannot be verified) to make a success story out of defeat.

A cornered beast, the Pentagon has now ordered reintensified bombing of North Vietnam. Still madder ventures like invasion of the North cannot be ruled out. But the bosses in Washington have been warned by Mr Chou-En-Lai. He said in Hanoi: “The Chinese people will not fear to make the greatest sacrifice to aid the Indochinese people until final victory.”

Mopping Up

The new MPs have been sworn in and Parliament is in session. A new Cabinet is functioning, with the look of old aunts and some young neices. The new policy of the Central Government has been announced. People are still wondering or raving about the spectacular success of the ruling party (and wondering if they will have to retire at 55 to create 200,000 vacancies for the unemployed). It now appears that the principal reason for the success was that Mrs Gandhi succeeded in associating the old Congress with all the ills that have beset the country, including her own failures, while promising a brave new world under her aegis. The grand alliance confirmed the evil image of the old Congress.

The situation in West Bengal is as before. No government is likely to take over before April, though the results were out by March 14. The results were not decisive but it should have

been clear to the CPM that the CPI would gang up with the Congress(J)—the main electioneering plank of the CPM was that all the other parties, except its allies, were Congress agents; had the CPM been able to arrange for a working majority, these parties would have continued to be dirty Congress agents. It was rather pathetic and futile, all those exchanges of messages between Comrades Sundarayya and Rajeswara Rao, the “accidental” meeting between a CPM ally and the Muslim League, the offer of the Home portfolio to a non-CPM candidate, following the inevitable exchange of letters between Mr Dhavan and Mr Jyoti Basu. All the March theses failed to click.

The confabulations in the non-CPM camp were not unexpected. The CPI, with the lucky number of 13 seats in the State Assembly is bent, naked and unashamed, on helping the Congress scarecrow, prodded by the Kremlin. Mr Ajoy Mukherjee, true to his name, will never concede defeat though his party has been reduced to a rump. But the surprising thing is the importance attached by the Congress(J) and the CPI to this caricature of a leader. The CPI, by the way, has forgotten the question of civil liberties. There is no remembrance of the PVA Act in its list of demands. Stooges cannot be choosers.

The talks on forming a non-CPM Ministry should not have dragged on. Perhaps the leaders are dragging their feet because they want the Army, CRP and the police to intensify their combing operations against their opponents. The CPM is talking, and rightly, of the coming offensive against it and has asked its followers to set up defence groups. The bizarre aspect of the whole thing is that quite a number of these groups were already preparing to come down on their most formidable opponents in the expectation that the CPM would form a government. Politicians who call themselves communists should have had a larger vision. They failed to mobilise the people against the army and police terror because of

their sectarian pursuits. Perhaps it is not yet too late, and some sanity will return? The chances are slim. The coming offensive is not likely to touch the leaders. It is the activists who will suffer. But there is already so much suffering at the hands of the repressive forces all over West Bengal that it will be difficult to break the indifference of what is called the general public.

Straws In The Wind

The lock-out declared by the Indian Airlines on March 14, close on the heels of the absolute Congress(J) majority in the Lok Sabha, must have been the first shot fired by what Mrs Gandhi would call the dictatorship of the people. Representing the interests of shareholders of a public sector organisation that is the taxpayers that is the people of the country, the IA management resorted to this dictatorial act because its employees had dared to work to rule and agitate for a pay rise.

If this be a test case in the matter of industrial relations in the public sector, workers' unions everywhere in the country should take note. The private sector must be feeling elated because when it suits it, it takes the public sector as the guiding angel and the angel has set a precedent of locking out 14,000 employees when a section of them wanted revision of their wage structure.

The IA management was properly shocked to know that the employees wanted an 80 per cent rise in wages. Aren't these employees getting the highest wages among the working class in the country? Shouldn't they be ashamed of asking for a pay increase again and again and that too to the tune of 80 per cent when their class brothers in the country are getting not even minimum wages? Haven't they already established themselves as a nuisance by frequently disturbing so essential a service as that of Indian Airlines? Wasn't therefore the management emi-

nently justified in dealing a stunning blow to these lazy, obstinate and well-off workers for the benefit of the people of India?

Strange enough, the fascist nature of the Government, working through the proxy of the IA, has gone unnoticed and unchallenged. True, for various reasons, the IA employees have been frequently held responsible for IA's abominable service records. But it is the management's failures in staff relations that is the root cause of the frequent work disruptions of the Airlines. The pilots for example had been given soft treatment on more than one occasion even though their high-handed behaviour had grounded all IA planes and caused a loss of Rs 2.5 crores during the November strike alone. Now the peons and porters, clerks and petty technicians are made to suffer because the management is getting intolerant. Intolerant of what? Intolerant of its own failure.

Now that the technicians' union had pruned their demands, a settlement may be reached. But that does not exonerate the management of the guilt of trying traditional capitalist methods to break the workers' morale. Suspension of union leaders including dismissal of one, wooing workers individually out of their class solidarity, threats of dire consequences if the workers do not prove themselves more loyal to the employers than to their unions, were all on the cards. The management would not give a damn if the lock-out continues for a long period, because it loses nothing but public money in its exercise of teaching a union, which is CPM-dominated and Calcutta-based,

a thorough lesson. Not that the union wanted a fantastic pay rise; Air India gave a 55 per cent pay rise to its 20,000 employees a week ago. And, as everybody knows, the demand for the 80 per cent increase was only a starting point for negotiations.

Let it be also on record that the IA management, so concerned with continuous rendering of essential services to the countrymen, had given the first priority, after the declaration of the lock-out, to making alternative arrangements to despatch lottery tickets and not the mail. And the workers were sought to be blackmailed by charges of ruining the country's economy which in plain words means the loss to the affluent air travellers and businessmen.

Rhodesia

The British Government has seen from its experience that it will never again be able to affect conditions in racist Rhodesia; still it has to pretend otherwise both for satisfying a section of the public at home and the African member countries of the Commonwealth. Four years before the Unilateral Declaration of Independence at the time of the constitutional conference under the chairmanship of Mr Duncan Sandys the white minority community made no bones of letting the world know that for the black majority there would be permanent racial helotry. The Constitution, however, spoke of a 'blocking third' representation for the Africans so that they could effectively oppose any retrograde constitutional amendments, a Bill of Rights and a Constitutional Council to review proposed legislation. The basis of African refusal to work the Constitution was subsequently vindicated as there was further repression of nationalist forces and the Constitutional Council thrown to the winds with the help of Certificates of Emergency. Mr Ian Smith had already set the trend by making 'independence' the main issue of the May 1964 elections—the Rhodesian Front Government's

'solemn' duty would be to settle the issue to the satisfaction of would-be investors and white immigrants. Anticipating a crisis, Mr Harold Wilson offered six principles as a way out; Mr Smith knew that his acceptance of the unimpeded progress toward majority rule, instead of helping him off the hook, would make him expendable to the segregationists. However, the RF regime would have taken some more time to go for the UDI if the threat of British military intervention was there. Mr Wilson was not a little surprised that his package offer made aboard the Tiger which made only some vague promises to the black majority was rejected by the Smith Government on some specious grounds. Sanctions have not made things difficult for Rhodesia because of her intensive trading with neighbouring South Africa and Portuguese Mozambique. Not a few countries have been doing trade with Salisbury by means of sanction busting. The NIBMAR pledge and the accompanying condition that the U.K. Government would be relieved of this obligation if a change in the Rhodesian attitude was noticed, and the rejection of the Fearless offer which did not make the granting of independence conditional on the achievement are all too fresh in memory. And talks about talks have been reported at different times. These have now been renewed. On what basis neither of the parties will say. But one can easily help oneself here. Mr Smith cannot be interested in a deal which will even indirectly envisage the advancement of the majority community; the door that has been slammed on it must for all time remain shut. Any agreement has to be at the expense of the Africans. If a deal is struck, Mr Edward Heath will have to feign that conditions now obtain which will lead to unimpeded progress toward majority rule. The 1969 Constitution has already sounded the death knell of majority rule. The Smith regime will be only too willing to permit Mr Heath this hypocrisy if the British Government gives it the imprimature of recognition.

Just out

LIBERATION WAR (2)

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View from Delhi

Delayed

Throw-Back To Dead-Centre

FROM A POLITICAL
CORRESPONDENT

CALL it a vote for stability, change, stability with change, slogans, gimmicks personality cult and what have you, but no bizarre permutation in the situation explains the landslide. Even the "I-told-you-she-will-get majority" people whisper in awe; "incredible" and "fantastic." Whatever brought this about, it means a throwback to the 1952 situation of one-party dominance because both the left and the right have been routed. The super-powers have reason to rejoice over the outcome because their geopolitical interests are safe and the stability of Indian democracy has been assured.

The juggernaut will begin rolling over the shambles of the two SVD governments in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and the Congress (Nijalin-gappa) governments in Mysore and Gujarat, in that order. At the time of writing this, the ruling Congress is set to wrest Orissa from the Opposition and form a coalition if it cannot form its own ministry. West Bengal seems to be heading for a deadlocked Assembly. In Tamil Nadu, the problem has been neatly solved—the ruling Congress did not contest a single Assembly seat which means it has leased the State out to the DMK for another term. In Punjab, the Akalis who hold power could not win more than one Lok Sabha seat which means a toppling operation is in the offing.

Thus, with the possible exception of West Bengal, the ruling Congress is out to establish its dominance in the States and rule the roost at the Centre, with impunity. The truncated Opposition will have to find a new

relevance.

Mrs Gandhi is neither right nor left and she made this clear beyond cribbing at her press conference on March 11. Both these are dirty words with the ruling party. Stability is the thing. Pragmatism is the credo. Sloganeering has substituted priorities.

Theoretically, the right has been routed as right parties go. But very soon the right will be part of the ruling Congress because the vested interests will withdraw support to the traditional parties of the right and try to build lobbies of their own inside the dominant party. So the classical Maurice Jones theory of one-party dominance has found new relevance now. Every party will be a marginal pressure group with a lobby inside. The Swatantra Party will look to the tycoons inside the ruling party. The social-democrats to the defectors who have made good. And the CPI to the Mohan Kumaramangalams.

The rout of the left has a lesson. The CPI (at the time of writing it had won 18 seats, West Bengal and Orissa results yet to come) but 17 of them with the support of the Congress. What would have been its fate had it gone it alone? The CPI (M) had won five and the hopes of taking the tally to a two-digit figure hinge precariously on West Bengal. The SSP and the PSP are all but finished.

Of the regional parties, the DMK has not only survived but has done better. Others have been nearly wiped out. The Telengana Praja Samithi which could withstand the onslaught is not a regional party but the platform of a regional interest.

Not only have the parties of the right been routed but most of the parties which had backed Mrs Gandhi at some point or the other beginning with the Congress crisis in July 1969.

Their equivocation and open or sneaking support to Mrs Gandhi have proved the undoing of the two socialist parties and the two communist parties. Had they stayed

neutral or voted against Mr V. V. Giri the confrontation would have been contained within the ruling party and the ruling classes. The communists were obsessed with the fear of a rightist coup. The CPI tried to fit the Congress split into its pet theory of national democracy while the CPI(M) was awed by the phantom of a rightist take-over.

For sometime it looked as though two parallel spectrums were emerging—one constellation of parties around the Congress (Jagjivan Ram) and another around the Congress (N). The Kerala mid-term poll witnessed such parallel spectrums. The Americans were promoting this theory. But this was a short-lived phenomenon.

The left parties (barring the CPI) realised the need to detach themselves from the Congress (J) but this came too late in the day, when the initiative had gone into the hands of Mrs Gandhi. The left could never retrieve the lost initiative.

The Americans were worried about Mrs Gandhi's growing dependence on the CPI and promoted a new line—of the reunification of the Congress parties minus Mrs Gandhi and Mr Morarji Desai at the top. This might have succeeded had Mrs Gandhi won less than 220 seats. The more likely thing is the mass defection of the Congress (N) following and the "new look" Congress lapsing into a broad-spectrum, amorphous party without any ideological cohesiveness, representing a multi-class-interest aggregation. So we are going back to the halcyon days of Mr Nehru. Every generation betters the previous one. Already we have begun hearing the drawing-room talk: Nehru would not have had the courage to split the Congress; but she has had. Nehru would not have had the courage to nationalise banks, she has had.

And so we return, to the glorious era of one-party dominance and absolute stability. If West Bengal defies the national pattern, Mr Sen-Verma with the help of General Manekshaw will hold the elections

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there to the last gun. We are assured of all the aid needed to keep us up just stable. Let the Congressmen slug it out inside the party and the side-lined Opposition wait for another side of anti-Congressism to build up. Parties are content to live from election to election until there is an election to end all elections. One country, one people, and one leader. Does that ring any bell?

Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

WITH the elections over Mr Jyoti Basu and Governor Mr S. S. Dhavan were again at their favourite game of writing letters to each other. Mr Basu raised questions which the Governor found it awkward to answer. It was really unfair of Mr Basu to have raised the question of Bihar when Mr Dhavan's colleague invited the leader of the party not enjoying a clear majority. It was not cricket. It was hitting below the belt. Mr Dhavan realized that even the sterile correspondence he was having with Mr Basu could of a sudden be dangerous. So, airily dismissing the affair of the Bihar Governor by saying that he could not discuss the conduct of a colleague, Mr Dhavan had no alternative but to beat a retreat.

Mr Dhavan is not Mr Dharma Vira. His ways are different. He can be all things to all people, and above all he likes playing the benign father figure to his 'Bangla people.' A role much in demand in the country, and let us admit, one which he has been successful in selling to many people here. The non-CPM parties opposing formation of a CPM-led Ministry in the State must thank the Calcutta Station of All India Radio and Governor Dhavan that they can now talk of forming a Ministry. But for the heroic efforts made by these two, the turnout at the polling stations might have been definitely less. As the party which had been calling for

elections, the CPM was practically the only one which was really prepared for them and in the prevailing mood of panic fanned by others, also the only one which could have mobilised the majority of its voters. This danger to the anti-CPM forces seems to have been realized by them too late when there was hardly anything they could do. At this stage the official machinery of All India Radio backed by the impassioned speech of Mr Dhavan not to send in a government elected by a minority, went into action, with results we all know. For once Mr Jyoti Basu could not rush off a letter protesting against this to the Governor, since the aim appeared so unexceptionable. Or was it? Was there not an indirect and unconscious suggestion in the exhortation from the Governor and the official radio which would work in favour of the ruling party?

East is East and West is West so far as the two Bengals are concerned at present. Never, of course, is too strong a word in history. Who can tell what will happen in the future? But as of now, those who talk and hope for a reunification as a result of the Sheikh's movement across the border are simply indulging in a bit of daydreaming. Except for some obscure groups writing slogans occasionally on walls, none of the recognised parties are willing to risk their necks by raising such a demand. Moreover, such daydreamers have not consulted the wishes of their brethren on the other side. Granting such a thing to be possible, there are no indications that Sheikh Mujibur's party would be willing to take back the refugees who have come to India, let alone reunification of the two Bengals. It is too much to expect that with the problem of bare survival which forced the pace of the movement, the Sheikh and his party would agree to saddle itself with additional problems. By declaring that all those who live in Bangla Desh are Bengalis, Sheikh Mujibur has already by implication given recognition to the status of Muslims from Bihar and

other States of India who have settled in East Pakistan.

Even though conditions in the two Bengals are different, one cannot help comparing what is happening there with things over here at the end of the first UF Government. Whereas things have been followed to their logical conclusion by the seizing of power by the Awami League with the backing of the overwhelming mass of the people, in West Bengal the entire energy was dissipated by a wrong lead. There was nothing to prevent the UF Government from declaring that it did not accept the dismissal which it had declared to be illegal.

It would have been interesting to see the result had the UF declared that it did not accept the illegal dismissal and continued to be the legally constituted Government of West Bengal. This is a question I had been asking some of my leftist friends but without any proper answer. Now from events across the border I have it. It was plain funk. They were plain scared of the upheaval which might have resulted. Good constitutionalists that they all were, it was a course that none could think of. No, not even the Marxist parties.

Coming down to the present, leaving aside wishful thinking of the unity of two Bengals, there is at least one thing that can be done. Undeniably, normalisation of trade and movement between the two Bengals would be a shot in the arm for West Bengal which may mean all the difference between life and a slow death. It would be foolish to leave this to New Delhi which is understandably taking the line that the movement in Bangla Desh is an internal affair of Pakistan. It would never do for the Union Government to encourage such movements just across the border. But at least a strong movement is the need of the hour on this side to compel the Union Government to remove all obstacles to free exchanges between the two Bengals as soon as the hurdles on the other side are removed, which from present trends may not be far off.

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The Last Days Of Che Guevara—I

HARRY VILLEGAS

Captain Villegas (Pombo), who saw action under Che's command in the Sierra Maestra during the armed struggle against the Batista tyranny in Cuba, was with Che Guevara during the campaign in Bolivia. He later became head of Che's personal guard. In Bolivia, Captain Villegas formed part of the General Staff of the guerilla force and fought in the battle that took the life of his legendary commander. This report on Che is now published for the first time in this country. Courtesy: Prensa Latina.

THERE at the oil wells, by the pipe-line that carries the oil to Africa, Marcos (Pinares) contacted a peasant. The men passed themselves off as Mexican engineers, but they were armed. The peasant's suspicion was not awakened by the fact that they were carrying weapons. It was the distinct military bearing of the man that struck the peasant as strange.

The peasant related this to his wife who worked at the oil refinery. Talk of the strange man continued until it reached the wife of a captain, and it was through the captain that the Army received information about the existence of a group of armed men who said they were engineers, but who talked in a strange way and who had beards. With this clue, the Army opened an investigation. The Army already knew that there was a strange movement in the area; that there was a cocaine processing plant, which is why the police came around to our camp twice before, asking questions. They took the peasant and with him as a guide, they began to follow the tracks of Marcos and his companions. The search led them up to where we were supposed to join the others. The day we arrived there with Che, was the day the Army arrived also. Marcos had already left but the Army saw fresh prints, so they continued following until finally

they came upon the camp. There they had a light skirmish and Marcos fired some shots.

Che had set up an observation post in the camp in order to detect the presence of the Army in the area, with a few hours advantage. There being no other means of communication, we were alerted by a messenger. But instead of attacking us from the front only, the Army tried to encircle us and fell behind us capturing our messenger, called Salucho, their first prisoner. On the same day they clashed with our men in the observation post. Our men shot and killed one soldier. This happened on March 17th, and we can see how the Army knew about the armed group in the area a few days in advance. Now they had a prisoner and two deserters as sources of information. The officer of the highest rank was Marcos, so he ordered our withdrawal from the camp.

Meanwhile, the people that Che had sent for arrived during our absence: Bustos, the Argentine; el Chino; and Tanya, who because of a series of unusual circumstances was forced to bring these people to the camp herself, a thing which Che had forbidden her to do since she played an extremely important role in the city, because of the long time she had spent in Bolivia and also because of the contacts she had acquired during this time. When we arrived on the 20th, there was a debate going on about whether the people should stay or not. Debray was there also. We got to the camp at El Oso on the 20th after a very difficult march across the river. I remember falling without being able to get back on my feet three times. We already had some men sick. I had to carry my knapsack and part of Alejandro's (Machin). We received the first indication that something was wrong during the march. We sighted a light military plane and

wondered why it was flying over this zone. We felt that something was going on, and hid in order to avoid being seen by the plane. Pancho arrived later with a message informing us of the situation, and when we got to the stream at El Oso, we found Rolando (San Luis) who was also looking for a place to hide the stuff that was being evacuated. But Che got angry with this and said a few harsh words to the effect that the more experienced men shouldn't go around serving as messengers and he immediately sent Benigno (Alarcon) and Rolando as reinforcements to protect the operation. Just as they were leaving, a message arrived saying that Pinares was thinking of withdrawing. Che opposed this and in view of the development of events, with the enemy knowing of the existence of a guerilla force in the zone and of our camp site, Che decided that the only thing left to do was to engage the enemy in a direct clash to determine if they were strong enough to fight it out with us, or if, on the contrary, we were strong enough to wipe them out.

Ambush

He decided to lay an ambush. Benigno was sent out as reconnaissance man, and Alejandro left later with most of the men. Tamayo, Tuma (Coello) and I stayed behind with Che to talk to Debray and the others. Che had already ordered the troops to advance and to set an ambush around this area, under the command of Rolando.

On the 23rd, while Rolando was checking the positions before giving the ground over to Benigno, they heard some shots and somebody coming towards them. The alarm was given immediately and they took up their positions. There was a very high and steep cliff there, which turned sharply out into a tiny piece of flatland. The flatland spread out

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on both sides and formed a wide beach with thick forests at its edges. They let the Army enter and opened fire on the soldiers.

All our actions in Bolivia were characterized by an extraordinary synchronization of gunfire against the enemy; we all fired as one man. Our men were expert shots, and usually hit the target with two shots. The fact is that we were very careful about wasting our bullets, a fundamental law of survival of the guerilla. When the enemy entered and received the first round of fire, they fell back with some casualties. Some offered resistance, among them, a captain who later surrendered. We didn't capture the entire force, only the advance troops. The majority retreated. When Che saw this, he immediately set up measures to fight the enemy in case they broke through the ambush.

Eight of our men participated in this, our first combat action; Rolando, who led the ambush; Benigno; Coco; Walter; Apolinar and Pablito. The outcome was favourable: we wounded five, took fourteen prisoners, among them a major and a captain, and I think, there were seven enemy dead.

We returned to our camp and were fortunate enough in getting some horses; we ate and decided to advance upstream along the river, so we sent ahead a reconnaissance team. We wanted to find a way out for our visitors, Debray, Tanya, Bustos and el Chino.

The battle had already taken place, so all normal exits were closed. I led the reconnaissance team. They came upon the enemy who were entering in that direction, so that route was discarded and Che decided to search for another way out. There's a little town called Gutierrez and near there is a small, pretty lake called Tiraboy. The area is close to Lagunilla. Che decided to go to Tiraboy where there are a few houses, take the town and send a raiding party to Gutierrez, grab a jeep there and take the visitors to the Santa Cruz road. We moved all along

the Nancahuazu river and had given the enemy a three-day truce to evacuate their dead and wounded. They didn't come during these three days and we stayed in camp. We didn't move, we stayed there waiting for the enemy's reaction. We really thought we were going to have our first fight with the so-called "Rangers". They came the fourth day, with the Red Cross. A truck loaded with soldiers preceded the party. We stopped the truck with soldiers, an error on our part, because we should have torn them apart. Braulio (Reyes) who commanded the group stopped them and told them they could not enter because the truce had expired. The soldiers turned around and left. Then we told the Red Cross that the truce had elapsed, but that they could take out the dead and wounded. They decided not to do it and left. Later on, when we left with the visitors, the only thing left of the dead were their skeletons.

It was from here that Che thought once we got Debray and the rest out, we could block off the roads the enemy would use to attack us, that is, the road that went to Lagunilla. But what happened? When we headed for the lake, we arrived at a point where we divided the troops in two groups. We left Rolando in charge of the rearguard at the entrance to the lake area, near a stream draining off from the lake to make sure that the enemy wouldn't attack us from behind. When we were about two kilometres from the lake, we came upon a camp. We searched it and discovered that the enemy had been there. We figured they had had an ambush waiting for us there. We kept advancing and took the village. We imagined the peasants there as good, kind folk and we gave generous treatment to our prisoners, but some of them escaped precisely because of our treatment. With the escape of these our plans to take over Gutierrez, find a vehicle to carry Debray and the rest away, went down the drain. We were now forced to leave at dawn. We began

to move forward until we found some people driving cattle. We talked to them, supplied ourselves with meat and gave them an official communiqué of the National Liberation Army to deliver to the city, but we never found out if they had fulfilled the mission or not. We killed some cows there and on the 10th, it seemed to us that the Army was patrolling the Nancahuazu area. We had planned an ambush on both shores of the Nancahuazu river. This part of the river is very shallow and becomes a stream that we had named Monkey Stream, because once when Che got lost here, we set out to look for him and came upon thousands of monkeys living there. We made our camp by this stream.

The Sick

I had forgotten to mention that when we left for this operation, we had left the sick in camp closer to the stream. They were Joaquin and Alejandro under the care of Eustaquio and el Médico, a total of four men. We went out to get food for them and to find a way out for these campaigns. With the cows we had killed, we took to them a good supply of protein to hasten their recovery.

Only the rearguard took part in the defence preparations at Monkey Stream, and the operation was again led by Rolando, because Joaquin was ill. Furthermore, Che had set rules that all important actions should be led by members of the General Staff.

The Army came looking for us. They closed in from both sides; and as the course of events indicated, they saw us first. They caught Rubio (Suarez Gayol) out of his position; Rubio, taken by surprise, tried to toss a hand-grenade. This is how the battle began. The Army fired first and killed Rubio and our reaction was to immediately fire back. Practically the same thing happened as in our previous skirmish. Again, we fired as one man, wounding and killing a number of enemy soldiers, while the rest retreated hurriedly.

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We collected the arms of the dead and rounded up the wounded and proceeded to finish roasting a cow.

We figured out that the Army would return with reinforcements to pick up their casualties. Therefore we reinforced the ambush with some of Che's men and others of the vanguard.

But, I forgot to clarify one thing. Why were we here? We were here at this camp because we wanted to return to the Tiraboy lake, take the village and get Debray and the others out of here. We were clearing a path by machete in order to reach the lake by another way.

What happened next puzzled us. Around five in the afternoon, we saw an enemy column coming towards us. We had an observation post on a hill. When we spotted the enemy, we were amazed, to say the least; there were about 120 soldiers coming forward confidently, as if nothing had happened. Furthermore, we never expected this. We had advanced somewhat, rather, we had extended the ambush a little on both flanks, because practically the entire column was in the ambush by now. We waited until most of the soldiers were in and then we opened fire. We wiped out one group and the rest scattered and took to the woods. And at this point, a series of rare incidents occurred. We left our positions in the woods and came out to the river to pick up fallen weapons when the soldiers took to the woods. This led to an irregular hunt on our part. Every once in a while we heard a single shot which meant that one of our men had found a soldier in the bushes, because the enemy had scattered through the woods, leaving behind their firearms. We got a heap of rifles. We all hurried around looking for firearms, so instead of the enemy soldiers being in the river, we were the ones who were there, occupying the place originally held by the enemy.

It was here that we captured our second Major, the same one that had led the troops in the first battle, Ma-

jor Sánchez. When he ran into the woods, he bumped into Coco who seized him. We told him to surrender his troops, but he began to shout to his men to return to their camp. Later, we talked to him and asked him how he managed to walk into the ambush the way he did. He replied that the ambush was inconceivable, because according to guerilla tactics, once a guerilla force carried out on operation, it would never remain in the same place and he was certain that we had retreated. This Major was one of the most honest people that we had ever captured. We gave him an official communique, which he later sold, and it was the only one that was published in the newspapers, which was all we were interested in.

After this we returned to our camp, picking up our sick on the way. There Che met with us and put forth our future course of action. He told us that we were now entering a phase in which we must constantly hit the enemy at his weakest points. He stated that perhaps we would operate in platoons and he especially emphasized the urgency of finding a way out for the visitors.

We decided that we should look for an exit through the trail that we had initially thought of, that is, Nacahuazu river upstream and south, toward the town of Vaca Guzman in the region. So we began a long, tedious march. We made camp at a place called Bella Vista, and found more problems. Our sick became more sick and we had new men on the sick list: in this case Guevara; Alejandro continued to grow weaker and Tanya became ill also. The first decision was to leave them inland at the Quiripiti river. We remained there three or four days and sent for the sick. We decided that since we had more than six people ill, we would leave a squad with them at the rear-guard. The squad had instructions if we didn't return within three days, they were to remain in the zone and avoid confrontations with the Army.

Forced March

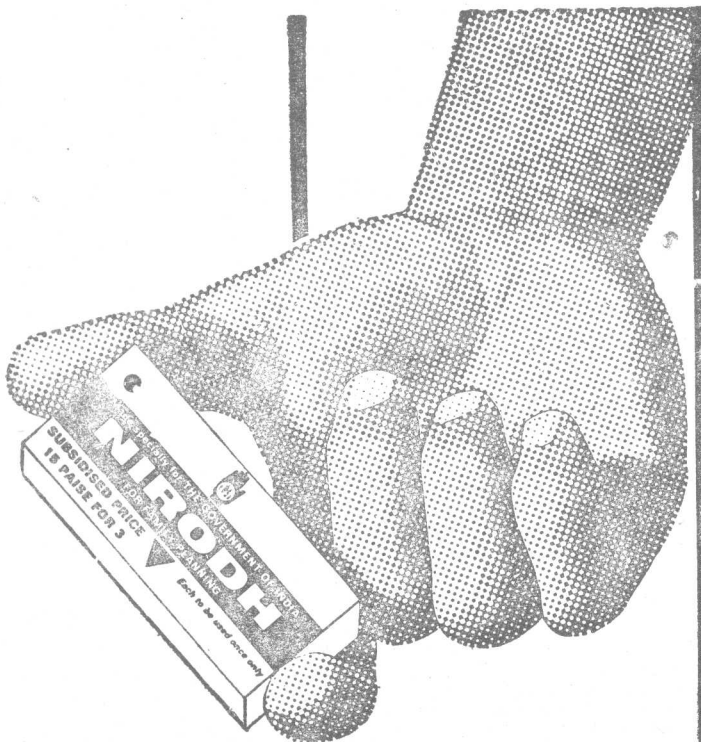
We made a forced march, finding

peasants here again. Once more we became friendly with the peasants but one escaped and gave information straight to the enemy. With this situation, we started off again toward Muyupampa. On the second night we came to the house of a peasant who had very pretty daughters but the peasant was hostile to us. He didn't want to sell us any vegetables or anything. We had to force him to sell.

We continued on in the afternoon of the same day and arrived at our destination at dawn of the next day. A journalist, Ross, arrived in the afternoon, accompanied by a peasant. He told us that the Army had taken the camp and found some documents; among them the Army said, was Braulio's diary. Ross also told us that it was being rumoured that Braulio's diary mentioned that Ramon was actually Che. That's why we took some precautions and Che changed his war name to Fernando. Precautions were also taken to keep the journalist from identifying the Cubans and Urbano (Tamayo); Braulio and I hid ourselves because we were black and we didn't want him to think that we were Cuban... there are no blacks in Bolivia. We continued our march at nightfall and decided to take a village. Before arriving, something strange happened. We came across the first peasant who treated us kindly. He gave us coffee and food and was a very willing person. We thought this strange but we continued on. In Muyupampa, we began to come to some decisions. First, Debray suggested the following: that he thought a proposal should be made to Ross to the effect that we would guarantee him an interview with the head of the guerillas only if he would use his safe-conduct pass and take out Debray and Bustos with him. Debray and Bustos had safe-conduct passes, but theirs were false. In any case, the interview would be set up and prepared by Che, and was to be done through me. Ross accepted and our people left to take Muyupampa.

(To be concluded)

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Portrait Of The Petit Bourgeois

T. Das

IT was the bourgeois revolution (whose political form was the French Revolution and economic form was the Industrial Revolution) which created the field in which a host of brilliant men evolved a new culture and sociology. Karl Marx integrated these discoveries, inventions and events, analysed them and developed his correct revolutionary thinking. In breaking up the old political and economic order, the bourgeoisie also destroyed the old thinking (i.e. philosophic) order. Learning became a bourgeois thing: more free, more fearless than ever before.

Seeing the behaviour—the politics, economics and culture—of the class immediately below that of the big capitalists, the service class, Marx called them the petit (small) bourgeois. These had all the aspirations and selfishness of the bourgeois but lacked the means to achieve them. Theirs was a tragedy of scale—they operated on too low a level, on too small a scale. Serving the bourgeois they made a philosophy of service rather than free enterprise. True, the 'service' was to free enterprise yet the sheer persistent, greedy ruthlessness which the bourgeois displayed when the chips were down. The petit bourgeois therefore developed inhibitions, morals and traditions which, in spite of bourgeois trappings, were quite different.

Their educational system—encouraged, most joyfully by the bourgeois—encouraged this pettiness, this "code of loyal service". Only those found brilliant (therefore useful) enough by the bourgeoisie were allowed to get out of the rut. (Others had to *break out* and were revolutionaries).

In spite of all this, European and English and American (later Japanese) education does exalt a certain degree of free thought and initiative. The powerful bourgeoisie of these

countries could scarcely build and run their empires with the help of a bunch of footstep-following clerks.

India's situation is different. The Indian mercantile bourgeois (pre-British) was either forced to turn landlord, starved of business or beaten to submission. Those who submitted became comprador. It is these compradors (capitalists who depend wholly or significantly on imperialist capital, technology, market and protection) who are at the pinnacle of Indian capitalism. India has not had either an industrial revolution or a bourgeois revolution. Every change was imposed *upon*, slapped on, or attached to Indian politics and economy. None grew from within. Feudalism with all its irrational, ugly and putrid trappings remained, shorn only of its independence.

Also, it was not the comprador who founded our educational system or even mainly utilised the services of the Indian middle classes. (In 1969 10 million worked for the Government and 6.6 million worked for the private sector). Rather it was the imperial power and the feudals that did so. The compradors had to damn well take what they got and be happy about it. Whatever "modernisation" they managed to bring about was purchased at the price of submission to the British. That is why we found the Tatas so subservient and yet so "modern" while the Birlas financed the Congress and retained their "gaddis". Even the Birlas' so-called anti-Britishism came out of the desire to strike a better bargain and out of envy against the Tatas, who were three times as large as the Birlas (assets Rs 95 crores as opposed to about 35 crores of the Birlas).

The Indian educational system was created by the British, quite unashamedly to train clerks. It has never radically changed. Nor was such a change possible without radical political change. This system was designed to destroy free thought and initiative, to instil the comprador philosophy of following behind, to kill

the feeling of loyalty to the national interest.

What is He.

The Indian petit-bourgeois has therefore within him:

The powerful remains of a paternalistic feudal culture, carrying with it all the traits of image worship, reverence for the aged and the ancient, blind, unreasoning faith, fatalism and narrow sectarianism.

The teachings of an imperial system devised to turn him into a clerk, carrying with it the servile qualities of unquestioning service to a foreign master, of being blind to, even contemptuous of, the national interest. A peculiar reverence for things foreign, a philosophy of 'Sahib knows best'.

The economic philosophy of a comprador bourgeois class which for sheer submission to imperialism, and loyalty to anti-national causes is notorious throughout the world. The Indian bourgeois is the most complete comprador in the world. The Chinese bourgeoisie had on occasion fought the feudals (1927-28) and the imperialists (1942-45) but the Indian bourgeoisie—never.

The Indian petit bourgeois as a class, therefore, is quite different from the European petit bourgeois seen, examined and stamped by Marx. The Indian petit bourgeois is completely alien to free thought and initiative. His teachers, his masters, his system do not demand these from him. They are rather frightened at any display of such thinking or initiative. The Indian petit bourgeois can therefore be termed more accurately as the petit *comprador* bourgeois. His ability to follow, to be servile, to obey, to copy in meticulous detail—these are his dominant characteristics. In general, his efforts are aimed at being 'modern' and aping things foreign. That is why every movement undertaken by him has failed to take root in the Indian soil.

It is necessary to note this vicious circle of 'sameness' in which the Indian petit comprador bourgeois is

involved. He loves his days to be a perfect succession of yesterdays. He wants his ideology pre-digested, his education bound up in a system of 'sure successes' and alphabetical stamps—B.A. M.A. B.Sc. etc. Nowhere in the world is there so great a concern for a degree allied with so little concern about actual knowledge. Every event he participates in or wishes to precipitate must bear a foreign parallel. If it does not, if it seems something new, he feels lost and starts yelling for help or applies the brakes or he loses his mind.

From the viewpoint of creativity in the realm of ideas and analyses, discovery and invention the Indian comprador petit bourgeois is impotent. He is so import-oriented that even his battle against the established order must be a pre-fabricated import. In implementing which he inevitably manages to botch up things, by veering widely to the left or slithering slimily to the right, marking his failure in shrill cries of fanaticism.

It is precisely this comprador lack of the ability to think freely and take the initiative, the total unscientific, image-worshipping claptrap heritage of feudalism which makes him mouth materialism and act idealistically. It is this comprador-feudal-bureaucrat thinking within him which makes him fear the peasantry and the working class. A fear which is composed in equal degrees of contempt and inhibition, of attempts to dictate to and efforts to stay away from the people. That is why mass satyagraha rapidly changed to individual satyagraha. Action on the streets leads on to mass meetings, courtrooms and Assembly halls—instead of the other way about and revolutionary armed struggle is interpreted to mean terrorism of the few.

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Fishes out of Water

If political 'fishes' stay out of the toiling masses, they die and rot and fester in the beach fringe of politics—attracting attention no doubt but certainly not developing into people's war. But the revolutionary intellectuals who rise from the petit bourgeois in India have always displayed the tendency to hurry things along. To do it for the masses; not to take the meticulous care that is necessary to arouse, organise and arm the masses. To reach the masses of any country, and society, it is necessary to analyse concrete conditions of that society, and go to the masses with this analysis.

The working masses are materialists. They do not accept imported abstractions, be they political or economic, British parliamentary or Chinese revolutionary abstractions. In order to analyse the concrete conditions in one's own society painstaking originality is necessary. Imported formulas will not help one a little bit. Efforts to force Indian realities into foreign forms will merely lead to tragic revolutionary clowning. The great revolutionaries from Marx to Mao teach us precisely this. To experiment, to pick and choose, to admit and rectify mistakes—a continuous balance of initiative and discipline. All the great revolutionaries, from Marx, Lenin to Mao Tse-tung have done this and have made these a condition precedent for the success of revolution. But the Indian petit bourgeois sadly lacks initiative and discipline; worse, he is not aware of this handicap. That is why the petit bourgeois becomes divorced from the masses and impatient with them. From there to the various forms of right and left opportunism is but a short step. From there onwards every marginal accumulation of armed power in their hands is a step towards fascism.

The 'left' intellectual in India needs to keep this in mind before he can either claim to be 'Left' or attempt to be an intellectual.

Book Review

Sudhin Datta : An Antique ?

ASHOK MITRA

IT is scarcely a decade since Sudhindra Nath Datta's death. And yet, his 'time' seems to have ended almost a century ago. Grave things have happened since 1960 in this State and elsewhere, in this city and elsewhere; even in a place as steeped in literary sophistication as Calcutta, the name, alas, does not quite ring a bell any more. There are other passions, other occupations, I dare add, other preoccupations. That peculiar mixture of care and cynicism, of faith and feudalism, which was Datta's individual elegance, has ceased to be a noteworthy category.

In solitary nooks and corners, memories however linger, memories flicker away. For here was a brilliant man, a man of, let me not flinch from using the expression, culture, whatever way you define it, a man who reflected in his manners and mores the superimposition of British ethos on the Bengali Hindu classical mould. What is intriguing is that this brilliance has left so little heritage. Contemporary Bengali poetry appears to be totally devoid of Datta's influence. Bengali prose too has careened away from his syntactical experimentations. Sudhindra Nath Datta has almost become an antique.

But since memories linger, loyalties do too. Rational correlates for such loyalties are not lacking either. For I do not consider it at all an absurdity that Datta's writings are available on tap in today's murder-filled Bengal. A certain tangibility still inheres to his poetry. If the quality does not quite come out in translations, the fault lies in the difficulties of inter-lingual communicability, not in Datta's poetic talents. Despite the early Tagorean phase, much of the poetry has a density of its own, and a tonality which is as much the product

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of metrical excellence as of highly processed thought. The content of Datta's poetry will of course have few takers now. As a literary attitude, that cross between nostalgia and fatalism is no longer unique. But, up to a point, form too does matter. While it would be difficult to accept the proposition that, once you leave out the formalism, nothing, absolutely nothing, remains of Datta, I would nonetheless stick my neck out in praise of the sheer technical virtuosity of his compositions.

About his prose, I am much less sure. The elliptical syntax and the concocted vocabulary apart, there is a nagging didacticism in his prose, perhaps because he was ever so anxious to introduce his Bengali readers to what was happening in Western literature. In the context of the early 1930s, his endeavour was not out of context. Precisely on account of this didactic zeal, the content was somewhat over-elaborated. None among us would now want to be preached about either Ezra Pound or James Joyce. In retrospect, his prose style, a hotch-potch of English mannerism and what can only be described as Sanskrit gothic, is revealed as an abortive enterprise. The fact of the matter is that you need a Sudhindra Nath Datta to negotiate the rhythm of Datta's prose. Many would now find the style circumlocutory and unnecessarily cluttered by scholasticism.

But, as I was saying, memories linger. The present volume,* lovingly edited by his widow, contains a number of essays and poems by Datta dating from, I presume, 1930 and 1960, mostly perhaps during the late 1930s. Part I, made up of three separate bits, namely, early chapters of an unfinished autobiography, a brilliant piece on Calcutta reproduced from the *Encounter* magazine, and an article on Jamini Roy's tradition of painting, is undoubtedly the best section of the volume. Each of the pieces included in this part had been

originally written in English. There is here an archaic charm in the prose which somehow goes well with the theme. The narration of life and arts in Calcutta around the turn of the century in that twilight world of north Calcutta aristocracy has a cadence of its own. The essay on Calcutta is in a sense an extended autobiography; the chronicle of Calcutta provides the backdrop for the autobiography of Sudhindra Nath Datta, and *vice versa*. The reminiscences also strengthen the impression that the Bengali renaissance already provided the early warnings of Bengali decadence. Datta did not believe in dialectics, certainly he was all sniggers about the dialectics which provide the core of economic determinism. But, go through these two pieces of his, you would come to the realisation that Calcutta, at its high noon, was already full of the premonition of death.

The essay on Jamini Roy has dated; the earlier effervescence of enthusiasm one felt about Roy's art has lost much of its vigour in the quasi-commercialism now being recollected in quasi-tranquillity. Still, as a specimen of well-argued, rigorously intellectual prose, the essay will have few peers.

Part II of the volume, consisting of translations of Datta's Bengali essays, is, I am sorry to say, a disaster. The editor has been singularly ill advised in her choice of the essays for translation. These had a message for the Bengali literati in the 1930s; they however convey little to an English-reading clientele circa 1971. To start out with the premise that 'poetry is premordial' might have been a wonderful incantation in 1932 or 1933; Quotations from *The Waste Land* would have been quite a rage along Calcutta's catwalks during the days of dying colonial culture. A discussion of Tagore's rhythmic forms too must have been received with accolade by both the gentry and the cognoscenti then; at this distance of four decades, these themes connote absolutely nothing. Moreover, the English renderings in this section would constitute a rich specimen of the most inept

translations I have come across; some of them are so inept that it becomes difficult to unravel the original meaning even in three guesses.

Poems

Part III mostly presents a sample of Datta's own translations, of his poems. This is on the whole excellent fare. Form by itself is however a fragile vehicle for the communication of poetic imagery. The Targorean vice becomes transparent in these translations: whatever he wanted to say could surely have been said in one-quarter of the space each poem has taken. I would not make quite the same comment in regard to "Cyclone" which reads about as well in English as it does in the original Bengali.

And yet, let me deliberately be harsh. Loyalty apart, what precisely does the publication of a volume of this nature achieve? What is the relevance of Sudhindra Nath Datta in today's world? Must we read him merely to explore our heritage? What exactly is this heritage? A certain cynicism about what the people stand for? A certain sneering disbelief of what the multitude would love and cherish? Or does the cultural heritage consist of escapades in-

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* The World of Twilight: Essays and Poems by Sudhindra Nath Datta. Oxford University Press. Rs. 30.

to obscurantism, or into discussions on the pure theory of literature? In retrospect, it is indeed plausible that many of Bengal's current woes are on account of the anti-belief of its writers and authors, who have unhesitatingly made a virtue of their ingrained contempt of the people. Leave aside Sudhindra Nath Datta whose philosophy of life was in any case as reactionary as it could be. Even the so-called 'progressive' intellectuals of Datta's days were 'clinical' progressives, who were wont to write in support of the people's cause, but whom you would never catch mingling with the people. (This attitude has hardly changed over the past three decades. Take a look at the solid phalanx of intellectuals who are today ganged up against the mainstream of the communist movement in this State). I used to admire greatly Sudhindra Nath Datta when he was alive; my admiration is not any less today. All the same, art passes, and, as one looks around, one feels that there is much to be said for anti-intellectualism.

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(Bengali quarterly)

NO. 14

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The Sound Of Music

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

WOODSTOCK is much more than a photographic record of the pop music and art fair, it is a grand invocation, a kind of holy communion, a giant congregation of young people from all over the USA who had come to find the meaning of life, love and peace. From the very beginning, the film spells out its accent on this collective consciousness. A restless, agile, flexible camera goes deep into the people, picking out their moments of joy, pleasure, meditation and also awkwardness. The filming has been done in a mood of gay abandon and the expansive spirit of the festival makes a direct contact with the audience. It is reported that sixteen movie-cameras were at work and every bit of this great event has been put on the celluloid with utmost care and authenticity. The skill with which this huge mass of celluloid has been shaped into an organic whole is a magnificent feat of dynamic editing. Occasionally, the screen has been split into two or three parts with different dimensions of shots on different slices. This is not a flashy gimmick, but a projection of the multi-level personality of the performers and the festival crowd. The songs have a simple nobility of theme with the evocative charm of folk legends and myths. The direct cinema techniques have been successful in bringing out some serious points about the philosophy of the drop-out.

Music has also an important role to play in *Jayjayanti* where Uttamkumar has a tough time in handling his five impish wards and Aparna Sen appears as a good fairy to take care of them. But the comic possibilities are never fully exploited and the scenes are badly staged. The film rolls along the beaten track of a hackneyed triangle melodrama with Lolita Chatterjee as a halfsize vamp. The kids are hopeless; Aparna Sen as the affectionate auntie is just passable and although Uttamkumar is

fortunately relieved of songs, it is time somebody put an embargo on his drinking and speaking in English on the screen.

Clippings

Laos : The Victims

Vientiane : Officially, American bombing in Laos and Cambodia is limited to "air support for troops in combat" or "enemy troop concentrations or structures". Over a thousand interviews with refugees from communist zones, however, contradict this. Every refugee has stated that his village was destroyed by ~~bombing~~ bombing while he still inhabited it. In almost all cases refugees report there was no ground fighting, and communist soldiers were dug into mountains or roamed the forest some distance from their village.

The American embassy here estimates that over a million civilians inhabit the mountainous two-thirds of Laos controlled by the Pathet Lao. The past year has brought more than 30,000 of them into the Mekong Valley, and their reports have given outsiders the first clear picture of the life under bombing now being led by the hundreds of thousands of villagers left behind.

The refugees say that from 1964 until 1967, bombing of villages was relatively sporadic and mostly conducted by Lao and American propeller aircraft. But in 1968 regular bombing of villages began, largely by American jets, and most were evacuated. Raids increased considerably after November 1968, when jets were diverted into Laos after the bombing halt over North Vietnam. In 1969, according to the refugees, the situation became even worse, with bombing attacks occurring as often as five or six times on a given day. As an old man put it, "the planes came like the birds, and the bombs fell like the rain".

During 1967 and 1968 most moved into the forest in the vicinity of their villages. They constructed

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small bamboo shelters near caves, trenches were dug into hills, or holes camouflaged by sticks and leaves. Many stayed in their hiding-places for months on end. Others would live in their shelters, running for a trench, cave or hole at the sound of an aircraft. It took four people a month to dig a trench or hole suitable for a family. Most households report that they dug several such hideaways during the course of the heavy bombing. "We would try to find places where we thought the planes wouldn't bomb," a 62-year-old woman from the Plain of Jars explained, "but in the end they bombed everywhere."

As a result, the bombing caused heavy casualties—often as high as 25% in villages surveyed. Most civilians were killed or wounded by anti-personnel bombs, though victims of 500-pound bombs, napalm, fragmentation bombs and strafing have also appeared in refugee camps. The villagers had to leave their retreats regularly to raise food, care for livestock, pound rice, and perform other such essential tasks. Many casualties occurred during these occasions.

Older people and children form an unusually high percentage of the victims. This was because the children were the most likely to become afraid and fail to find shelter during a raid. Older people "could not run fast enough" or did not react quickly due to the disabilities of age.

Education, commerce, religious observance and agricultural production were severely curtailed. Even before 1969 schools, markets, co-operative stores and pagodas had to be re-located in the forest. Heavier bombing after that made regular groupings of people almost impossible.

Fear of being seen from the air also restricted farming activities. By 1969 villagers had abandoned most of their ricefields, turning to cultivation of manioc in the forest and subsistence plots of rice. They worked on their fields mainly at night, with the aid of small kerosene lamps. Harvested rice lying out in the open was a particular target.

One of the greatest hardships was the long and often hazardous portage of ammunition and rice for the Pathet Lao. Before the bombing began, the villagers say the guerilla army handled its logistics itself. But as the raids grew in intensity, villagers were called upon to carry supplies for several months a year.

Livestock posed a particular problem. Many cows and buffaloes were killed by bombs or by ingesting grass or water poisoned by defoliants.

The danger of lighting fires is also often mentioned. Smoke by day or firelight at night tended to attract the bombers. People were often afraid to cook, and found it difficult to bear the cold during the freezing dry-season nights. The material damage was considerable.

The bombing had little effect on the Pathet Lao army, refugees say. Communist guerillas could move through the forest in small groups, avoiding the villages. They were adept at digging in and figuring out where aircraft were likely to strike. Interviews with about 100 Pathet Lao defectors tend to confirm this; one former company commander said: "The planes could rarely locate us. If they did, they could not come too low or we might shoot them down. If they stayed high, they could not hit us."

Refugee reports are supported by such eyewitness accounts at those of Jacques Decornoy, *Le Monde* correspondent, who visited the Pathet Lao stronghold of Sam Neua province in the spring of 1968; US Senate studies issued by the Kennedy subcommittee on refugees and a paper prepared by a UN expert here.

The refugees interviewed are in some ways relatively fortunate—they are out of the firing line. Life under the bombs continues for hundreds of thousands of Laotians whose minimal wish, one can presume, is that American air activity be confined indeed to "troops in combat" or "enemy concentrations". (Fed Branfman in *The Far Eastern Economic Review*).

For Burning

Hanoi: Two South Vietnamese prisoners captured in fighting on Hill 500 of Highway 9 in Laos said... that United States aircraft "dropped napalm on the position to burn everything" after some South Vietnamese surrendered.

...Hien said: "When we left for this operation our comrades said that this time there would be no return." Minh added: "We travelled all night without stopping because our officers feared desertions. In my platoon one man mutilated himself in order to be sent back. The commander of the Dinh Khang battalion had to strike several men who lacked morale."

The two men explained that they were then taken to Hill 500 by United States helicopters. "The Americans had only one idea—to get out of the area. They pushed us brutally out of the helicopters, threw down our packs and went. Several men were hurt as they fell out", Minh stated.

"Day and night the guns pounded away and the wounded screamed out. One helicopter landed in an attempt to carry out evacuation; but it received a direct hit and went up in flames with its three American occupants. Two other followed, but they were burnt as well."

Describing the fall of the position, Minh said: "It was 11 o'clock at night when two guards, Quy and Khien, gave the alert. We heard an M. 16 burst and we dug in. The attackers were everywhere, throwing grenades and firing bursts. My platoon was decimated in five minutes. We gave ourselves up."

"We were given rice and water and the prisoners collected weapons, while nurses tended the wounded. At this moment the American aircraft arrived and dropped petrol on the position. It was "Dac" petrol, a solidified inflammable product. We heard cries from the wounded awaiting evacuation. And then there was silence." (Jod Henri, *Agence France Presse*).

Wisdom From After

On the other side of the border (of East Pakistan) the Communist Party of India (Marxist), which even after the elections, is undeclared in allegiance and works as a united leftist front. But it gains from the terrorist activists of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) who are working together with the Naxalite militants to make sure that the poll will produce a communist victory. The pro-Moscow group is largely ineffective. Thus the political instruments for common action in both Bengals, a general area of frustration and stagnation (though the industry and progressive development is almost all on the Indian side) do exist.

Mrs Gandhi may be able to reverse the tendency in India to regionalism and disintegration. China, moreover, is ill-placed to take advantage of the Bengal situation, even if Peking is disposed to look so far afield. It is a question which Pakistan would inherit the understanding with China. East Pakistan may prove more amenable to approaches—especially if accompanied by aid—from India with Russia in the background, and it is much more ready to drop the quarrel over Kashmir. Yet a broken Pakistan, one part of which cooperates with China over Kashmir, while the other part cooperates with China to detach West Bengal, is an uninviting prospect. For India, for the area of the Indian Ocean, for the contest between Russia and China, the problem of Bengal is indeed critical. (*The Times*, March 6).

Letters

Elections

With the elections over it is time to take stock of the net gains achieved by the socialist camp since the call was given by the CPI(M) to restore parliamentary democracy scuttled by the Gandhian betrayer Ajoy Mookerjee in confabulation with the

Congress(J), their masters—the industrialists, monopolists and jotedars—and a conglomeration of opportunist elements and fence-sitters like the SUC and RSP egged on by the CPI. No doubt, the party has emerged as the largest party, conclusively proving that despite the mud-slinging campaign by the political clown of this State and his associates, the masses have not rejected the CPI(M) at all. But then the party would have to realise that for its ever decreasing militancy and its over-eagerness to work hand in glove with reactionary forces to share seats with them it has gradually alienated itself from the masses where, in the ultimate analysis, the strength of any communist movement lies. In the industrial field its strength has increased but its poor show in the industrial belt of Calcutta is most disheartening.

The party, has by way of acquiescence, let the reactionary Centre demonstrate its fascist face—its really ugly face behind a deceptive socialist facade. At the same time it has, by meekly submitting to the latter's guiles and gimmicks, let that power butcher and maim not an insignificant portion of militant cadres branded as Naxalites. For their revolutionary zeal and urge not a few youths have laid down their lives which would not go in vain, though, for the present, their wrong tactics have strengthened the hands of the reactionaries, renegades and revisionists alike. Grim and gruesome stories of torture and brutal murders in lock-ups often leak out, reminding one of the advent of fascist rule in Germany.

A divided left has always helped the bourgeois rulers in different countries and in different times. Both the CPI and CPI(M) forget that to bring revolution during the post-World War II period when neo-colonialism has already flung its tentacles far and wide across the country under the aegis of the bourgeois rulers, requires more than participation in parliamentary democracy. Originality of tactics coupled with strategic actions with mass par-

ticipation is an imperative necessity to unite all the genuine leftist forces and defeat the growing bourgeois-cum-fascist rule.

It is true that the Congressites of different hues would go the whole hog to prevent any alliance between the leftist forces now that their own ability to form a bourgeois government single-handed has been nipped in the bud. But it is debatable whether the CPI(M) should try to share ministerial chairs with some dubious Marxists for some supposedly short-lived gains or go to the masses to arouse them further and expose the rule that goes under the name of parliamentary democracy.

SUMITA SINHA (SEN)
Dhanbad

The Lok Sabha elections in India with a landslide victory for the ruling Congress have clearly shown that the people have a clearer understanding of a demarcation: on one side democratic parties of all shades with their false, hypocritical and opportunistic character championing very dishonestly, the cause of the people and on the other different groups of revolutionaries and the CP(ML) who are telling the people that their problems cannot be solved without a forcible overthrow of the Government, and advocating, seizure of political power through a protracted people's war from below. The people have tasted the rule of parties of all shades in different provinces. These parties have now been thrown into the rubbish heap of history. The worst happened to the CPI which posed as the vanguard of the working class. They discarded the basic philosophy of Marxism and allied with the ruling classes for some more seats in Parliament, which they miserably failed to get. In the eyes of the people they have been reduced to an insignificant group of opportunists licking the feet of their erstwhile enemies for existence.

Once more the people in India have given the ruling classes the opportunity of a stable government to prove

the sincerity of their professions. The last two Prime Ministers fell a prey to their reactionary policies at home and abroad; the present one, Indira Gandhi, will not be able to fare better in the face of rocketing prices, increasing unemployment, the deteriorating economic structure coupled with an ever-increasing awareness of the failure of the parliamentary system and reliance on militant struggles at home and a general trend of armed liberation struggles throughout the world. The ruling classes will soon realise and understand what is written on the wall and those who are writing the alphabet of revolution in India with their blood will be in the limelight before long.

VED PARKASH GUPTA
Bhatinda

This year the West Bengal elections assumed a new dimension. Never before had the State organs utilized all their machinery for the success of an election. We thought that this could happen only in South Vietnam, but now we have seen it in West Bengal too: Newspapers, radio, police, CRP, the army, barbed wire, mopping-up operations, all sorts of intimidation and what not.

Since all is over now let us calmly analyse the bourgeois data regarding the elections. According to Mr Raghavan, the Chief Election Officer, the percentage of polling was nearly 61%. In 1969 it was 64%. What is more interesting was the number of invalid votes. It reached the highest ever peak of 7,22,032 which constitutes 5.5% approximately (i.e. on an average 2600 approximately in each constituency). Was this due to the ignorance of the people as stated by the CEO or their attitude of unconcern towards the elections?

Official data can never reveal the percentage of proxy voting. In my observation the total number of proxy votes cast by all parties and the bureaucracy was not less than 12,000 in each constituency. However arbitrary it may seem, one who knows the ABC of elections will confirm my

observation. Now if 2000 constitute 5.5%, 12,000 would constitute 25% approximately. It shows that actual genuine voting was about 30%. Bourgeois elections cannot be a yardstick to measure a revolutionary situation. Yet people's non-participation in the elections must be construed as a political gain for the CPI(ML).

ARUP ROY
Asansol

I hope Mr Editor that you would hail the victory of the CPI(M) in the State Assembly elections notwithstanding your sometimes admittedly justified criticism of its backslidings. It was hemmed in by all the opportunists and social democrats, the reactionaries and the pseudo-socialists; its cadres were battered and bullied in its strongholds. In Durgapur prior to the polling day the cadres were beaten and locked up without trial on false, fabricated and fantastic charges of murder and abetment to murder, their houses searched night after night under the pretext of combating the Naxalites while the goons and thugs of Congress(O) leaders' INTUC had a field day in attacking and battering and bashing the heads and limbs of CPI(M) union boys with the aid of the CRP. Its lone fight certainly deserves commendation even from its detractors. Those who were eyewitnesses to the scenes would testify what a reign of terror was unleashed by Congressites of various hues in the labour or lower paid employees' colonies. But with determination and defiance the workers and the employees thronged the polling booths and voted for the CPI(M) candidates—murderers in the jargon of the Congressites and CPI leaders. They have shown up, above all, the AITUC in its tattered clothes—the INTUC had already been shown without its clothes.

Mr Adinath Bhattacharya, writing in your journal, once observed just after last year's strike in Durgapur that 'the battle has been lost, but the war is still to be fought on'. Here is, at least, the dim yet distinct sound of

cymbals reminding you that nothing has been irretrievably lost, and the mettle would be tested and tried in the coming round till the rout of the bourgeoisie and their lackeys is once for all completed. The CPI(M) no doubt has its drawbacks, but praise it for the lone and brave fight. Its tactical warfare, unlike the strategic warfare of the CPI(ML), has laid bare the character of the different political parties stalking the scene with socialistic platitudes and unmasked the most warped of them—the CPI leaders and the party—before the yet gullible workers and peasants.

MAMATA BISWAS (SM).
Durgapur

Repression In A. P.

Apropos the article (February 27) dealing with police atrocities against Andhra Pradesh revolutionaries, I should like to add that the members of the A.P. Revolutionary Writers' Association are now being closely shadowed by the special branch. The A. P. government has banned a collection of revolutionary poems, its editor, Mr Kisan Rao, (Chinnapendyal-Warangal) who happened to be a working committee member of the RWA, has been arrested. He was even refused bail.

NIKHILESWAR
Hyderabad

"March"

The Andhra Pradesh Government has banned *March*, a book of revolutionary poems in Telugu, and arrested Sri P. Kishan Rao, its editor.

The rich hope to be secure and stagnant with the help of votes, but history, people, rivers and poems march on.

RACHAKONDA VISWANATHA SASTRY
Visakhapatnam

Our agent at Varanasi

MANNALAL DAS

D-35/321A Jangambari

A Farce

Lenin's formulation that "independence of the judiciary in a bourgeois state is a farce" is being verified every day.

A very shameful incident occurred in the court of a magistrate in Chandigarh, when a Naxalite leader, Mr Hakim Singh, was produced on a charge of bank dacoity. He shouted slogans and by chance another undertrial prisoner, Mr Darshan, who was neither a Naxalite nor known to Mr Hakim Singh, also shouted Inqilab Zindabad. After disposing of the case against Hakim Singh, the judge ordered the police to take Darshan to the police station to "teach him a lesson". The police, after torturing Darshan, again produced him before the judge. He did not apologise. So he was sent back and tortured till he was very weak and broken. All this happened within a couple of hours.

Prof Harbhajan Singh, another Naxalite leader who was also there for the hearing of his case, is said to have rebuked the judge on his indecent performance. One can well imagine the fate of undertrials who appear before judges for justice and a check against police atrocities.

VED PARKASH GUPTA
Bhatinda

Left Intellectuals

I agree with most of the positive formulations of Arun Majumdar and S. C. (February 20) regarding the 'Role of the Left Intellectual' (January 23). I wish they had refrained from the various personal digs aimed at me—that hardly contributes to the clarification of ideas. I must admit it as a defect in my article that it could be misunderstood so much. My treatment of the problem was partial and the title was pretentious. There would have been less misunderstanding if I called it "Task for the Left Intellectual", for I discussed a certain task the left intellectual has to perform in the present conditions and did not define his entire role.

S. C. accuses me of negating practice by the left intellectuals, of not taking into account the *total* life of the intellectual, of dividing the totality into an intellectual part and a non-intellectual part. This is all a misunderstanding. Let me reformulate my proposition.

- (a) Any leftist intellectual—or non-intellectual—has to practise leftism in the totality of his life.
- (b) An intellectual is one whose primary means of self-expression is intellectual activity.
- (c) A left intellectual is one who practises in the totality of his life and therefore in the field of intellectual activity as much as in all other fields.

S. C. misunderstood my use of "only". He thought I was considering and approving of a man who practised leftism *only* in the field of intellect; that is, who did not do so in the non-intellectual parts of his life. But what I meant was, among all those who qualified to be leftists by definition (a) above, *only* those who satisfy also criterion (b) above ought to be regarded as left intellectuals. S. C. thinks of intellectuals who fail to be leftists because, whatever they think, they do not practise leftism in their life. I agree such an intellectual cannot qualify to be a left intellectual. But I was thinking of a person who regards himself as a left intellectual because he is an intellectual and because he practises leftism in certain intellectual fields, even though he does not practise leftism in the intellectual field in which he is a specialist.

I do not understand why it is supercilious to talk of the intellectual having a comparative advantage in the job of cultivating and imparting knowledge. Marx indeed talked about the disappearance of division of labour, but that he visualised for the most advanced stage of communism. Division of labour and specialisation have to remain for a very long time; and cultivators will specialise in cultivating land, miners will mine, traders will trade, singers will sing and likewise intellectuals will specialise in the cultivation and propagation of

knowledge. I do not see that by talking of the specialisation of the intellectual I suggest that he is a giver who does not receive anything from the rest of the society. Of course I agree that correct knowledge can come only from practice; I only emphasise that practice must cover his intellectual field as well. S. C. and Arun Majumdar think of a person who fails by being bookish, who tries to write an Indian history of economics from a Marxian angle while refraining from leftist engagement on the social plane. I was emphasising the person who fails by refraining from practice in the field of his intellectual work while engaging in leftism in selected fields of his social life. Both are cases of failure.

Marx pointed out long time back that philosophers tried to understand the world, while what was necessary was to change the world. Hence I have no difficulty at all in accepting Arun Majumdar's formulations: "A left intellectual's primary job is to change his society and his investigations should be directed towards this direction. I would also accept his proposition that "A left intellectual believing in revolution should first become truly left through his practice of revolutionary struggle at the front subject of course to the scheme of division of labour provided by the revolutionary army", provided of course that there is such an army and that army does provide a scheme for the division of labour. But surely the army would not find it useful to have in its rank an intellectual who is all full of revolutionary fervour but who remains in his intellectual field a prisoner of bourgeois ways of thought.

ASHOK RUDRA
Calcutta

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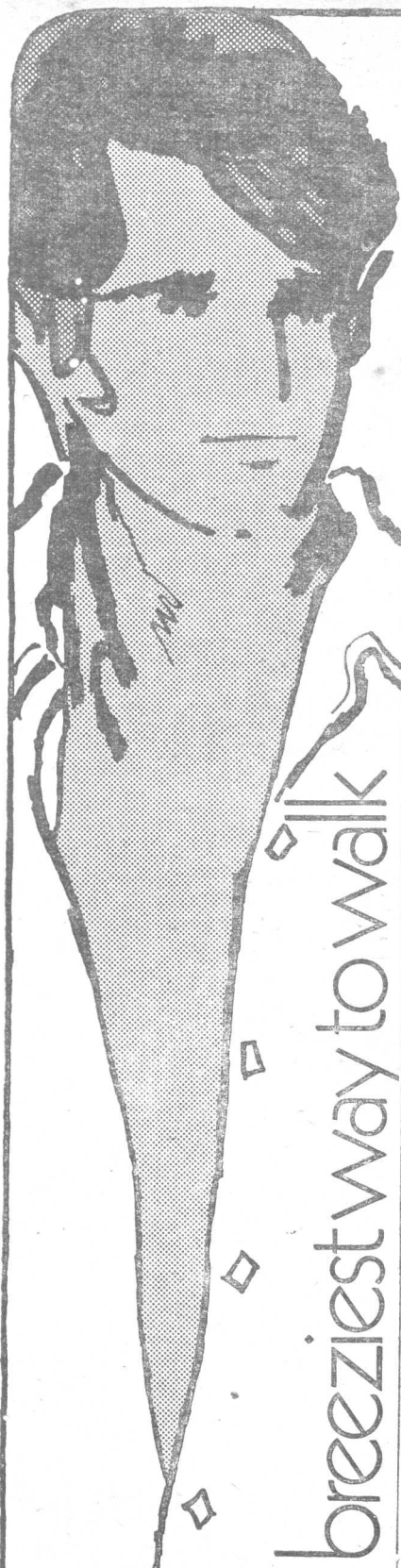
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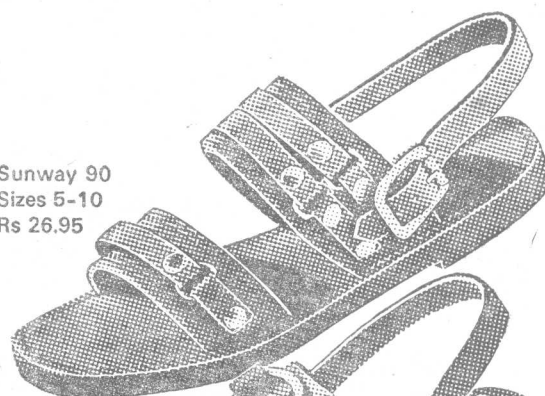


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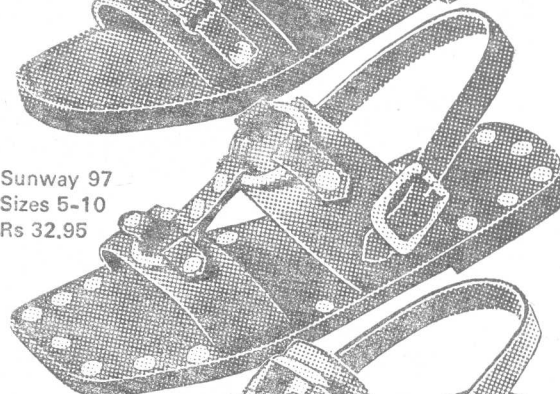
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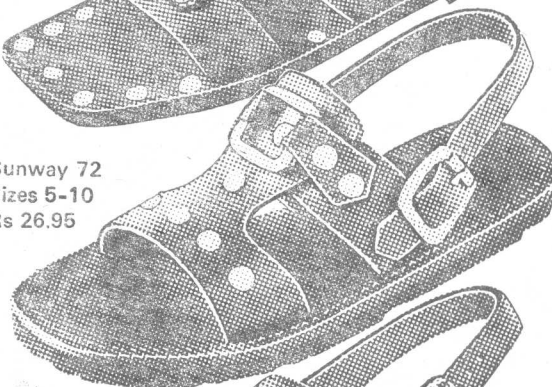
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