

# frontier

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Editor : Samar Sen

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BY SAMAR SEN FROM 61, MOTT LANE,  
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TELEPHONE: 243202

## OPPORTUNITY TO SEIZE

IN the jubilation over the release of the absentee President of Bangladesh, the magnanimous role of the new President of Pakistan, or West Pakistan, if you will, in the affair should not be ignored. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman himself paid a handsome tribute to Mr Bhutto in acknowledging that but for his much-maligned political rival he would not have been able to come out alive from the Pakistani prison. It was not an easy decision for the Pakistan President to make, especially when he was aware that Mujib was not prepared to touch with a barge-pole his suggestion for a confederation of what were the two divided wings of undivided Pakistan. In deciding to release Sheikh Mujib unconditionally he has shown the courage to accept gracefully the unavoidable and in seeing him off to London at dead of night he carried out that decision with courtesy and graciousness. Being a politician the Sheikh seems to have appreciated Mr Bhutto's gesture and his difficulties. His offer of friendly relations with Pakistan suggests so. But not those super-patriots of Bangladesh who floated a canard that Mr Bhutto sent a planeload of assassins in Mujib's trail to do him in neutral London.

With Mujib's release it is time for India to do some hard rethinking. The abnormal relations between the two neighbouring countries cannot be allowed to continue indefinitely. The Pakistan President has taken over at a time of grave internal crisis. He has to contend with diverse forces, each pulling in a different direction. A few days ago, Mrs Gandhi said Mr Bhutto was blowing hot and cold at the same time. Does not the Prime Minister know that a politician may at times be left with no alternative? Some of her colleagues are doing it, though the circumstances here are not compelling. What is her Defence Minister doing? Is he not brandishing the sword given him by the Jana Sangh? Mr Bhutto is trying desperately to ride out the storm within his country. Until he has been able to establish his mastery, he will have to speak in more than one voice. He will have to make a temporary truce with one to put down another; he will have to placate today the forces he has set down for suppression tomorrow. By his summary reforms in the economic sphere he has already created many powerful enemies. It is natural that he should be reluctant to antagonise the army hawks simultaneously and create a situation which may overwhelm him—even physically. Mr



Bhutto is the only person who can build Pakistan into a strong and united country. His failure will gladden only the bigots in this country.

With the State Assembly elections to be held practically all over the country within a few weeks the temptation to speak from a position of strength may be great. Unfortunately for our secularism it may win the ruling party some votes. But to yield to the temptation will be to court defeat in victory. The vanquished may have many inhibitions; he suffers, as the Prime Minister has pointed out, from a trauma. He does not have the freedom that the victor has, and it is for the latter to try for a true and abiding friendship which is necessary for both. In our self-adulation we should not forget that "garibi hatao" still remains an oft-mouthed vote-catching slogan. Mr Bhutto has made a gesture by releasing Mujib and reconciling himself to the reality of Bangladesh. He has reinforced it by toning down his bellicosity towards India. The opportunity is waiting to be seized by India to normalise relations with Pakistan.

## On This Side

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman reminded Monday's mammoth meeting in Dacca that it was Mrs Indira Gandhi who had appealed to almost every head of state to try for his release. It was indeed very noble of Mrs Gandhi. But she also knows that not all imprisoned men are equal. Her regime in West-Bengal is keeping thousands of political workers in overcrowded, suffocating jails indefinitely without trial, with little food and other amenities and with frequent infliction of vicious death on those who count and those who cannot put up with the sub-human conditions. And now hundreds of those who have survived are being packed off to Tamil Nadu and Kerala where their relatives cannot see them even once a month.

Charity does not begin at home in this blessed country.

Details of the terror unleashed on the CPM rank and file and others do not get into the mass-circulation dailies. True, some of the partners of the erstwhile United Front do not have a clean record of tolerance either. But there is this difference—they kept the police passive when they set after others, whereas the Congress (R) Bahini has the fullest passive cooperation of the police, the CRP and the administration. Against the joint onslaught people can do very little, their leaders even less. This is because they cannot think of anything but conserving their forces for elections.

The corruption practised by men hired for the refugee camps by the administration is coming to light. A team of government auditors was beaten up in one camp where it found, it is alleged, that 60 per cent of the inmates did not exist at all, that the rations and the money allocated for them went to the camp assistants and contractors who were in collusion with officials higher up. The phenomenon of such co-operative corruption is not uncommon. Calcutta Corporation is there. But what is inconvenient is the question—if refugee figures can be inflated by 60 per cent in one camp, what was really the total number of refugees?

Bangladesh has indeed helped our administration to hide many chancres.

## Phantoms

The Nixon Administration's attempt to rationalise the resumption of supply of Phantoms to Israel has proved supercilious. Being in control of vast stretches of Arab land, the Zionists have nothing to lose from the continuance of the present situation. Militarily much superior, they can inflict heavy damage on Arab States in a conventional war. The world knows about it all. In the circumstances, U.S. officials' argument that the delivery of Phantoms will help ease Israeli conditions for en-

tering negotiations for an interim settlement in the Middle East appears bizarre. To placate the Arabs, the supply will be staggered over a long period of time. Mrs Meir may say anything but she has never returned empty-handed from Washington. In fact the present U.S. decision was taken when Mrs Meir was confabulating with President Nixon. A statement issued in early December said that the U.S. Administration would "continue to maintain its ongoing relationship of financial assistance and military supply to Israel." The other recent development of significance is the decision to resume two sets of negotiations—one under the indefatigable Dr Gunnar Jarring and the other under Mr Joseph Sisco. President Sadat has managed to wriggle out of his self-proclaimed deadline, but in the process has confirmed the popular notion that he should not be taken seriously. As the year 1971 was drawing to a close, Mr Sadat was heard telling his visitors that just because a decision had been made did not mean that it must be implemented immediately. At the same time the Egyptian officials were saying that there would be no decision, only a drawing of conclusions. The Egyptians are today tired of being blown hot and cold. Strategic considerations as also the restraining influence of Moscow do not permit a full-scale Egyptian attack; still Mr Sadat considers it necessary to psyche his people for war which might break out as a result of massive Israeli retaliation against any future Egyptian artillery bombardment along the Suez Canal or hit-and-run commando raids from either the Mediterranean or the Red Sea. Mr Sadat is dejected that the UN General Assembly debate which produced an anti-Israeli resolution was overshadowed by Bangladesh developments. Although the Egyptians were repeatedly told to prepare for war, they were never given the impression that there was no further scope for political negotiation. Mr Sadat must be wishing both Dr Jarring and Mr Sisco all luck.

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## Washington And Hanoi

A few thousand bombs including quite a few near-nuclear ones were Nixon's end-of-year greetings to Hanoi. Speaking to justify this grisly gift, Mr Laird, the U.S. Defence Secretary, said that Hanoi broke the unwritten agreement of the 1968 bombing halt and the recent escalation was meant to bring her to the line. The list of Hanoi's failings includes the shelling of Saigon on December 19, the building of a new trail through the demilitarised zone and the shooting down of U.S. planes spying over North Vietnam. Quite apart from the logical perversity of such a conditional halt, the Secretary was in fact contradicting his own earlier statements made elsewhere. He had attributed the reason for the latest communist offensive to their frustration with the course of the war in Indochina. But by a queer twist of logic he now explains that the latest bombing was meant to protect the remaining troops in South Vietnam. He also admitted that the infiltration routes had been there for years and, if newspaper reports are to be believed, the shelling of Saigon was in reality nothing more than the tossing of a few rockets into the city.

Plainly Capitol Hill has other reasons for escalating the level of violence. Until now the U.S. has dominated the Vietnamese skies. The latest reports, however, indicate that North Vietnam, anticipating Washington's future role in Vietnam, has strengthened its diminutive air force

and gave the Americans an idea of their air might by downing five Phantoms over Laos. Use of sophisticated weapons in the last air raids and open orders to U.S. pilots to strike at the SAM air bases illustrate the Pentagon's nervous reaction to Hanoi's growing air power.

A deeper reason for this desperate American reaction may be Washington's apprehension regarding the communists' intention in Indochina. Apparently there has been a general offensive in the peninsula last month. In Laos, they have overrun the Plain of Jars and have threatened the CIA's base at Long Cheng. In Cambodia they have seized Route No 9 and decimated government and South Vietnamese troops in Chelna Z. Strategic towns like Pleiku or Phnom Penh are at their mercy. There is nothing new or dramatic in these communist successes—this has been the familiar pattern in the Indochina war. But this time they have done it with a difference. Not only have they gained new regions, but they have also advanced their striking time implying a possible intention to follow up these early gains when the country dries up. U.S. intelligence reports have confirmed this possible red offensive in the early months of this year. Nixon, by ordering the strike, sought to avoid such an embarrassing possibility particularly at a time when he is to begin his presidential campaigning.

nese and Ceylonese governments when the leftist rebels were routed there, that she supported the Naga and Mizo rebels but not the Bangladesh rebels. They believe that with the proposed Nixon visit to Peking the cat is out of the bag.

Truth will out, in course of history. Meanwhile, Bangladesh is a reality, the Sudanese and Ceylonese governments are firmly in saddle, the Naga and Mizo rebels are definitely lying low, autonomy for Kashmir is a far cry. Practice being temporarily over, theory is on. There has emerged a fierce intellectual battle on who slanders whom. What is in reality the Chinese foreign policy and its concept of international communism? Without minimising the importance of theoretical discussions, it must be said that much of the debate seems fruitlessly expended upon inconsequential issues.

The crux of the issue is to determine whether any movement, secessionist or integrative, helps progressive forces, to start with, and the socialist revolution later. If China did not support Nigeria, it must have found the social-imperialist threat in Nigeria more dangerous than its alignment with the U.S. support to Col. Ozuku. If it did not help the rebels in Sudan and Ceylon, it must have considered them spurious. If it did not help the Bangladesh struggle, it must have found the social-imperialist designs in Bangladesh more dangerous. If it had helped the Naga and Mizo rebels against the bourgeois Indian Government, it must have considered them potentially capable of throwing off Indian control and becoming socialist.

Intellectuals here must convince themselves and others with plain facts and principles that the Chinese policy has been all along consistent. It would not do to throw mud at one another and rest. If there has grown up a strong anti-China feeling, giving scope to slanders, it is their failure and none other's. If they consider social-imperialism to be a greater threat than plain imperialism,

## Between Slander And Truth

*A correspondent writes:*

Russophiles here, taking the cue from various Soviet Union propagandists, find today that China is working as the proxy of the USA or vice versa. They believe that the recent U.S. bombing in Vietnam was aimed at destroying Soviet arms in Vietnam, with the consent of China; that the

Chinese are helping the Israeli Government to destroy the Arab States; that China supported reactionary Biafra when it tried to secede from a progressive Nigeria; that China went hand in glove with the U.S. in the endeavour to destroy the liberation struggle of Bangladesh. They point out that China supported the Suda-



# Back To The Old Game

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

they must explain why China can help Vietnam along with the social-imperialists, but not Bangladesh. Much of what has been said about China vis-a-vis Bangladesh is pure slander. For example, the CPM with the rest of other anti-China forces, are playing up the Chinese broadcast to the effect that Bangladesh refugees in India have the same character as the Tibetan refugees in India. It is a slander, twisting the broadcast. What the Chinese said was that India was perpetrating a folly in using the Bangladesh refugees and invading East Pakistan; it would have been India's folly if it had invaded Tibet by using the Tibetan refugees. But not all is slander. The victory of the Awami League in the elections was a fact; the genocide was a fact; the refugees were a fact. And it is also a fact that China chose to side with Pakistan because it considered the social-imperialist designs a bigger threat to revolutionary forces. The mopping up of the Mizo leaders in Bangladesh apparently points to the correctness of their stand. But the point for clarification remains; why they thought Mizo and Naga rebels to be potentially stronger against India but not the Bangladesh forces against Pakistan? There is no doubt that the biggest threat to revolutionary forces today is the collaboration of social-imperialist and imperialists in carving out on the global level their respective spheres of hegemony. But, for the time being, confusion has arisen because China sacrificed the potentialities of the mass discontent in East Pakistan and sided with Pakistan, leaving Bangladesh for the social-imperialists. The trade pacts shortly to be entered into by Bangladesh with the Soviet bloc will be strengthening the bond between the social-imperialists and Bangladesh. China has yielded ground, if not in principles, but at least in immediate manoeuvrings. The task for true revolutionaries here is to establish unambiguously the correctness of the Chinese line by analysing the events in Ceylon, Sudan, Nigeria, Bangladesh and India. Mudslinging helps none.

**S**WEPT off their feet by the shrewd timing of the announcement on embassy-level relations with Hanoi, the hatchetmen of New Delhi's Left Establishment are, however inadvertently damning Mrs Indira Gandhi and her foreign policy aides. One hears so much about India's foreign policy shedding its inhibitions imposed by U.S. pressures and asserting its independence of direction. Thereby, they are admitting by implication that it was never free in the past and always subject to U.S. pressure. They are giving away the real game: it is being openly said that the decision was timed to secure maximum gain out of Hanoi's reported fears of a Sino-United States "collusion". One thought that the foreign policy wizards wanted a higher level of relations with Hanoi because they recognised North Vietnam as a strategic force in the future South Asian politics and as the best medium for normalising Sino-Indian relations. It is all too well known that the Soviets who have been putting pressure on India to accord diplomatic recognition to East Germany first and ambassadorial level relations later have been silent and altogether unenthusiastic about upgrading the relations with Hanoi. The Soviet interest in Hanoi, as far as New Delhi is concerned, began only a few months ago. Much is being made of the circumstance that the decision was announced despite United States threats of economic reprisals. Does it mean that New Delhi has lost all hope that the United States would revoke its decision and its "hardlock" will not unfreeze aid? Had there been any hope of such a happy ending, New Delhi might not have thought of raising its level of relations with Hanoi, it follows logically.

New Delhi's silence about the United States naval activity in the

Indian Ocean was not in the least surprising because it is now confirmed that while the Seventh Fleet may return (having pulled out of the Tonkin Gulf), the Soviet naval units have already been there. A protest by India should be addressed to both the super-powers but such a moralistic posture is no longer possible after the historic treaty of August 9. The United States has acquired the Bahrain base and the Seventh Fleet task force was busy staging exercises off Ceylon, using high-density deployment of Soviet naval units as the alibi.

With the Bangladesh and refugee problems almost out of the way, Mrs Gandhi has been devoting more time for politicking. Her task forces are going about the States with the enthusiasm of demolition squads, questioning the right of non-Congress ministries or those led by bosses not aligned to her factionally. The bosses are being trounced systematically and Mr Y. B. Chavan is one of them. The new kulaks fattening on profits, family sugar co-operatives and through the panchayati raj set-up are the support structure of the affluent Congress party in Maharashtra. Mrs Gandhi has successfully undercut Mr Chavan and captured a large part of the organisation there. Bossism is to be replaced by one super-boss armed with a massive mandate.

It is now fairly certain that West Bengal would go to the polls in March. Congress assessments indicate chances of a comfortable victory with the support of the CPI and other allies. The CPI(M) cannot afford to give the impression that it does not want elections now but would hate to see it held. Mr Jyotirmoy Basu met the Prime Minister to complain about the terror tactics of Congress-run organisations like the Chhatra Parishad (which seems to



have done well in the college union elections in several areas) and the Yuba Congress aided by plainclothes "police guerillas" hired on Rs. 105 a month, and other rough-necks. The CPI (M) which went about annihilating the Naxalites often in co-operation with the Congress terror squads is at the receiving end of violence now. It should have known that this was coming. At the end of 1969, when the new-look Congress decided on an all-out war against right reaction and left-extremism, one delegate wanted the Naxalites specifically mentioned instead of a euphemism like "left extremists". This was rejected by the leadership and the implications of this were obvious. Once the Naxalites had been contained the Congress could turn to the CPI (M). For

quite some time thereafter, Mrs Gandhi's precarious position in the Lok Sabha made the CPI (M) a strategic force though she had already engineered the toppling of the Nambudiripad ministry in Kerala. After the March 1971 elections, the Congress can take on any party even without the gratuitous support of the CPI (M)

Mrs Gandhi is reported to have admitted to Mr Jyotirmoy Basu that every party has its contingent of anti-social elements. The CPI (M) has no reason to compliment itself on this admission. Outside a few conflict-areas, it has had no reservations about supporting a "semi-fascist" government. West Bengal is one State where it had a reasonable chance of winning power through the ballot box

without the support of the CPI. The Centre's strong-arm methods are aimed at depriving the CPI (M) of this chance. In Kerala, the party cannot think of winning power on its own in the foreseeable future. The following in West Bengal had been fed on the hope that a clear victory is assured at the next poll and that the party's tactical line was more than vindicated in the State in the March 1971 elections. But the leadership did not expect to be the biggest political casualty of the Bangladesh war. Large sections of its following are likely to opt out of the parliamentary system and would be fought by their own party before they are fought by the government.

January 9, 1972

## The Other Side Of The River

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

WITH the Awami League Government installed in Dacca, the curtain now rises on Act II of the Bangladesh drama. No doubt there is wild jubilation among sections of city and townsfolk, and the Indian Army and an army of Indian and foreign correspondents are there to boost this jubilation. But in the countryside the picture is almost as grim as it had been during the last nine months of nightmare, frenzy, confusion and chaos. The Mukti Bahini is indeed having a good time, implementing the Awami League Government's 'Crush Programme' (as some of them called it enthusiastically), drawn up most faithfully after the Indian model, which is mainly directed against the left radicals.

The manner in which the commandos, mostly drawn from among the Awami League students' wing, are roaming the streets of cities and towns with heavy-loaded arms presents a Texan spectacle. Of course all the time there is also the talk of disarming them and holding them in check; but, nevertheless, they are given a

free hand in going on a spree of... you know what. Sometimes their actions no doubt evoke mild rebuke from men in position, but the next moment they are absolved of all responsibility on the grounds that they won't stop until they have completely retaliated against the misdeeds of the Yahya regime.

Every young man in cities and towns who had not fled to India in the wake of the army crackdown is a suspect. They are being dubbed as Pakistani collaborators and Razakars. 'Razakar' happens to be the most convenient phrase these days in Bangladesh, as 'anti-social' is in India. In most cases these young men are not even allowed time to clear their position. Even those who once joined the Mukti Bahini but were screened out subsequently for political reasons are not being spared. The existence of Razakars has provided a good handle for liquidating the left radicals. The Razakars are unlikely to turn into implacable political opponents. On the contrary, they can be turned into a potential army which

the Bangladesh Government is trying to raise. A section of the leadership is, in fact, opposed to taking any retaliatory action against the Razakars and has started thinking in terms of manning their projected para-militia with them. When the Bangladesh Government gave a call to the Mukti Bahini to surrender their arms and deposit them with the Government, it was actually intended for the left radicals who have in their possession huge stocks of arms, snatched and captured. As the left radicals have not so far responded to this call, the Government is haunted by the spectre of another armed insurrection. Besides, armed clashes between the Mukti Bahini and the communist revolutionaries are not uncommon, especially in the countryside.

In cities and towns the Mukti Bahinimen are on the look out for the left radicals. Combing operations are going on in full swing with the help of the Army and house-to-house searches are conducted for Maoist literature. In some cases young students were shot dead on the spot a few

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days ago after some Maoist literature was discovered in their possession. If the suspects have gone underground, members of their families are subjected to harassment.

Of course it is not so easy to liquidate the left radicals, who are operating in rural areas. There has been a lack of contact between the masses and the Mukti Bahini, a gap which has widened over the last nine months. The left radicals are taking full advantage of this communication gap to step up their activities among the peasants. Besides, the fear of guerilla attacks is very much there in the minds of the Mukti Bahini. In resorting to any combing operation in the countryside, they do not dare to move without the Army's company. The other day some top-ranking commandos of the Mukti Bahini (or Mujib Bahini?) bluntly said they knew it for certain that the East Bengal Naxalites had fought against the Pakistani Army in implementation of their programme of national liberation, but still they were not to be trusted; both the activists and sympathisers of

the Naxalite movement had to be eliminated to secure the future of Bangladesh. So what is already happening and is likely to happen to the East Bengal Naxalites should be anybody's guess. One of the top-ranking left radical leaders, Mr Badruddin Umar, who is well known in intellectual circles of both the Bengals, has already been arrested.

Wild jubilation is absent in the countryside which today looks like a thunderstruck tree, still breathing for air, the roots firmly grasping the ground. To an average man in a village the whole picture is still clouded and he does not know exactly what had been going on so long and what the present would be like. Diverse circumstances forced many poor villagers to join the Razakars, because that way they could save their families from being butchered by Yahya's hordes, apart from earning some little money. All that they came to know vaguely after the army crack-down was that Pakistan had been involved in a jihad against India, that it was the 'Nauka' (boat, used by the Awami League as election symbol) which had brought them all the misfortune. Unfortunately, there was none from among the Awami Leaguers elected from these areas to explain to them what they were struggling for. When the Mukti Bahini entered villages from across the Indian border, the villagers were forced to provide shelter to them with the suspicion that they were harbouring some Hindu agents. It was confusion and ignorance that landed the poor villagers in the horns of a dilemma and consequent trouble. A time soon came when they had to suffer at the hands of both the sides.

Sober sections of the Bangladeshi people have now started asking why these poor people, a potential force, could not be brought on their side if it was a war of independence. Were these people not exploited by the Pakistani rulers? How at a certain stage could the left radicals in certain areas succeed in making them realise that they were fighting to rid themselves of all kinds

of exploitation and how was it possible on their part even to go in for such action as killing zamindars and jotedars who were the main agents for recruiting Razakars? Of course, it is very easy to raise such questions, but very difficult to answer them.

### Wretched Condition

After seeing the wretched condition of villagers one kind-hearted East European correspondent wondered why some people in cities and towns did not feel guilty every time they ate sumptuous food when people in the countryside were starving. It is no doubt too much to expect that the lot of the masses would change overnight with the attainment of freedom. Over the last nine months they have suffered atrocities of all kinds; their parents, daughters, brothers and sisters have died, many of them are still untraceable and kept as prisoners in various army camps. They are still in a state of excruciating uncertainty because the days of organised gangsterism are not over. Their tragedy is that while a Razakar, who may be a helpless victim of circumstances, is a contemptible creature ordained to suffer the ultimate penalty, General Niazi and the like, the manufacturers of horror and bestiality, are adored as honoured guests. One can imagine the extent of their tragedy when one sees their children, their legs dangling like loose strings, their bellies bloated by malnutrition and inedibles, looking with wide and pleading eyes. Let the Mukti Bahini go and tell them that the days of their agony are over.

If there are people who are jubilant, if there are people who are suffering, then there are also people who are perturbed. Their anxiety is now turning into distrust. They constitute a sizable portion of the intelligentsia. But they are yet to articulate their anxiety. There are also assorted political elements among the jubilant masses, who, at this hour of euphoria, have no alternative but to masquerade under the Awami League label. There was a time under the military regime when the intelligent-

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sia belonging to a particular community were branded as Indian agents because of their radical pronouncements; now they are being dubbed by the present Government as Chinese agents-provocateurs. However, it is an experience to meet these people. The impression that generally emerges from a desultory talk with them is that they are not quite happy at the way the Bangladesh Government's reliance on the Government of India on all crucial issues is growing. The Bangladesh Government has already issued orders granting some very special privileges for the Indian Army now stationed in the country, coupled with the provision that anybody responsible for causing any grievance whatsoever among the Indian Army-men shall be jailed for three months and more, as the case may be. What irks people most is the uninhibited manner in which the victorious Indian Army-men fraternise with the vanquished Pakistani Army-men. They cannot also reconcile themselves to the way some Indians are showing interest in their affairs. There is also the danger of encroachment by Indians who have stakes in Bangladesh. Already a good number of people have started preferring claims to the landed properties they once sold to their neighbours in the erstwhile East Pakistan through a backdoor process, because during the military regime no Hindu was allowed to sell his property. Since there is no valid document to prove the ownership of the properties transferred, the purchaser finds no alternative but to part with it. In some cases those who cannot be persuaded to give up their acquired ownership are being intimidated. Such a state of affairs seems to be posing a big problem for a section of the lower middle class people. How long can the Bangladesh Government afford to ignore the simmering discontent?

In the meantime, refugees are leaving for their homes though they do not know if their homes are still in a habitable condition. Instead of resigning themselves to uncertainties, some are trying to carry along with

them the loose bamboo materials of the shades under which they have so far lived like animals. While leaving for home, some of them also

manage to take with them one photograph of Mrs Indira Gandhi to be worshipped along with the goddess Durga next autumn.

## After The Kill

A. P. M.

**T**HE business community in India has so far reacted to the birth of Bangladesh in a rapidly succeeding pattern of diverse calculations. When it became apparent in early December that Bangladesh was going to get away from Pakistan, habitually reticent businessmen became voluble, relishing a still unknown but obviously profitable future. "Yes, yes", they sounded almost lyrical, "we will give them all that we have. After all, they don't have anything left, have they?"

This benevolent, missionary attitude has since been succeeded by a hard, almost ruthless, unconcern. While obese business-suit-clad businessmen, business executives and government department secretaries milled around a well-laid buffet lunch, the tall, bespectacled President of the Federation of the Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry elaborated on the apparent volte face. "We are not America, are we?" He began. "We don't have surpluses which can be dumped conveniently on Bangladesh. Whatever we will give them will have to be taken out of our own consumption."

"And it is they who need help, don't they?" The gentleman with the melon-head continued. "Let them come and beg. Only then will we decide on what to give them and in what quantities. We are not in a hurry, are we?" he concluded neatly.

The constant harping on the word 'socialism' has irked the former Indian missionaries. A Marwari gentleman almost wailed, "How the hell are they going to feed all those millions? How can they build up their trade and industry if they don't let private businessmen run things? By

running after 'socialism' they will ruin the country."

This particular lament was caused by a far more serious event. A long motorcade, carrying overfed businessmen and their bejewelled, far more healthy, wives, was turned back from Benapole. "You are not wanted here", the local people had reportedly told them and Indian soldiers had actually turned them back. This was a serious enough setback and Calcutta businessmen and their brethren elsewhere have taken note of it. Individual traders had been slipping in previously, carrying home items bought cheaply and selling them in Calcutta at exorbitant prices. It is, however, trading in the opposite direction that had originally excited them. And, by all indications, their calculations appear to have been right.

So long it was food which was in short supply in Bangladesh. Now, as people are going back everyday, more and more items are getting scarce. Cloth, for one thing. Most cloth shops in the towns are still closed. The cloth merchants at Burra Bazar are almost wringing their hands in despair. What they would appreciate is a blanket entry into the Bangladesh market. This both the Governments in Dacca and Calcutta are till now refusing to consider, on the obviously lame plea that no trade pact has yet been signed between the two countries.

The business community is also perturbed over India's stand in the matter. The entry of the STC in the Indo-Bangladesh trade is positively hated. "The STC wants to profit at the expense of the poor bastards", moans a particularly aggressive trad-



er. But the STC will have to buy items from Indian businessmen, will it not? "Yes, but you know what hard bargainers they are, don't you?" The trader concedes. "Do you believe we will receive a fair price from the STC?"

And so the plaintive tone rambles on, interspersed with sudden outbursts of defiance. Despite the threat and the cajole, however, it seems that

the Indian businessman will continue to be frowned upon in Bangladesh. It is true that during their stay in Calcutta, the present cabinet of Bangladesh got pally with a few Calcutta businessmen, but the important thing to remember is that all of them are Bengalis. And even when speaking officially, the Bangladesh Government people make plain their concern over what may happen if Indian business-

men are given a wide berth en masse. "We don't want to exchange Pakistani exploiters for another set of bloodsuckers, do we?" commented a high-ranking Bangladesh official. "It would be far safer to trade on a government-to-government basis."

Therefore, Indian vultures are now circling sadly over the kill, despairing that it might after all be put beyond the reach of their claws.

## Agrarian Classes In East Pakistan (1949-70)—II

N. K. CHANDRA

**A**NALYSIS of classes should ideally be conducted at the level of individual families in the rural areas. With a set of clearly defined yardsticks and with all necessary data available one can categorise each family into one or other class; of course, even then there would usually be a large number of border-line cases causing a lot of headache for the analyst.<sup>16</sup> Such problems increase manifold when the study is made at an aggregate level and some crucial information is missing. Yardsticks have to be crude to get round these difficulties.

The concept of the middle peasant obviously occupies a focal point in class analysis. Once we settle on it, the demarcation lines between the middle and the poor or the rich peasant can be drawn. Unfortunately, even among Marxists there is no universally accepted definition of this term<sup>17</sup> and the one we choose will naturally be controversial. Basing ourselves on Lenin and Mao we define the middle peasant to have the following characteristics: (a) he should be basically self-reliant, i.e. he should be able to produce in good years at least as much as is needed for the maintenance of his family throughout the year; (b) he depends mainly on family labour, supplemented to a small extent, if necessary,

by hired labour.<sup>18</sup> (26, pp. 161, 176-85; 27, pp. 130, 146-7; 31, p. 15; 32, p. 183) \*

Using these as general guidelines we assume that (i) the middle peasant and his family should have a 'conventional' standard of living; (ii) the size of holding is adequate to meet the above requirements; (iii) the extent of hired labour should not exceed one-fourth of total labour employed on the farm; (iv) the typical middle peasant should have at least one plough and one pair of bullocks. In our calculations below we shall endeavour to find the *minimum* size of holding for which the above conditions are fulfilled.

1. Per capita requirement of cereals is estimated at 350 gms/day by the government nutritional experts (39, p. 95). Since, however, there are important gaps between recommended levels and actual availabilities in respect of most other food items, we have arbitrarily raised cereal requirements to 400 gms/day or 146 kg. a year<sup>19</sup>. Of course, man cannot live on cereals alone and one must consider other items of expenditure. There are unfortunately no well-defined conventions here which one could fall back upon. A survey of agricultural labourers' families found that cereals take up nearly three-fifths of their total expenditure. (8). Middle peasants must be better off and so cereals should take up a smaller fraction of

their family budgets. On the other hand, they have more of milch cows, goats, poultry, small vegetable plots, etc. so that their cash purchases of clothing, kerosene, salt and similar commodities from the market are correspondingly reduced. Despairing of finding a more convincing alternative, we assume that these other requirements of the middle peasant are two-third of their cereal needs. Total consumption needs per capita then come to 244 kg. per year.

2. According to official figures the average rice yield per acre was 418 kg. for the two agricultural years 1959-60 and 1960-61. (36, p. 118). These two years are taken as the Agricultural Census Year was 1960, overlapping both of them. From the gross yield one has to deduct the costs of production. What is the relevant cost in this context is controversial. There are five broad types of costs; notional or imputed costs of labour and materials supplied from within the family, costs of labour and materials purchased from outside and finally, costs of credits. Costs of outside labour should be ignored for, by definition, the middle peasant buys more or less the same amount of labour power as he himself sells. His own labour is obviously not a cost for our purpose. It is slightly more complicated for family-supplied materials. On the one hand, no cash purchases from outside are involved and these inputs

\* Figures in brackets refer to source material. The list of books will be given in the last instalment of the series.



can be considered as by-products of the household economy as it functions through the year. On the other hand, these inputs often have alternative uses within the farm or outside. Nevertheless, we find the former approach more appropriate. As for purchased materials these should undoubtedly be reckoned as costs; so should the cost of credit as it has to be paid to the moneylender. Thus the amount available for consumption/sale equals gross output minus the costs of purchased inputs and credit.

### Cultivation Costs

Once more we face an information gap. Although a number of studies on costs of cultivation in East Pakistan have been made, few are available here. We are obliged to rely on two studies made on behalf of the Academy for Rural Development, Comilla, by M. Rahman, covering winter-crops during 1964-65 and 1965-66, grown on selected tubewell-irrigated plots in a number of villages of Kotwali Thana, Comilla. Surely, these do not give us a representative picture of rice production costs in East Pakistan for a variety of reasons: the area covered in the studies is much too small, winter rice varieties are nowhere as important as the *aman*, tubewelled farms are rather rare in the province, and so on. Our only hope is that the proportions found in this study would not be widely off the mark.

We have actually used average costs and returns data for the two rich-varieties, *boro* and *shaita*, and for two consecutive years. As a proportion of gross returns we find that in 3 out of 4 cases, (i) purchased materials amount to one-fourth. (ii) all, i.e. family-supplied and purchased, materials two-fifths only. Interest rates were typically 60% p.a., often paid in kind: (44; 45) Rahman Sobhan found that interest rates in the E. Pakistan countryside were often as high as 80-100% p.a. (51, p. 68). In the light of other fragmentary evidence on the terms of repayment in kind, it would be safe to assume an effective

interest rate of 40%, not on an annual basis, but over the 3 or 4 pre-harvest months for which 'productive' loans are typically made. Credit requirements were estimated at 25% of the agricultural production by the official Credit Enquiry Commission in 1959 (39, p. 305). It would appear quite reasonable, since this is also the part of purchased material inputs. We thus find that gross yield should be reduced by 35% in order to get the net amount available for self-consumption or sale, which comes to 271 kg. per acre. Put differently, 0.9 acre of riceland is necessary for each person belonging to the middle peasant class.

3. Before we decide on the minimum size of landholding for a middle peasant family, three other factors have to be reckoned with, namely, the size of the family, the extent of rented land and the intensity of cropping. The larger a family the more is the land needed to reach a given level of living. Assuming that costs and returns are shared fifty-fifty between the owner and the cultivator, one acre of owned land is equivalent to two of rented land for the cultivator. Similarly, if there is double-cropping, the cropped area becomes twice the actual size of the holding. In respect of all three variables just mentioned, there are significant differences between the various size-groups of land-holders. It would be more appropriate to consider them, or rather the marginal ones, separately.

4. A preliminary look at the Agricultural Census tables shows that those holding up to 2.5 acres are clearly small peasants. For the next group 2.5 to 5.0 acres, one finds that, on average, the family size is 6.15, rented land is 23% of the total and cropping intensity is 1.56, i.e. roughly speaking, there is double-cropping on 56% of the land. Making allowance for the last two factors, the average adjusted cropped area per family is 4.89 acres while the requirement is 5.54 acres. So the group as a whole cannot be considered as middle peasants. On the other hand, it can be easily worked out that taking the

parameters as above, the minimum size of holding for the family to belong to the middle peasant class is 4.4 acres. For larger holdings, 5 acres and above, although the family size increases and cropping intensity declines, adjusted crop area substantially exceeds the minimum requirement.

Since available tables do not give us any information regarding landholders having 4.4 to 5.0 acres and since our postulated living standards were set at rather low levels, we would prefer to call only the 5+ acre group as middle peasants.

One objection to our calculation so far is that it ignores all agricultural products other than rice. It would, indeed, be desirable to consider jute as well, since it is the second major crop; others really do not matter as they take up too little a part of the cultivated land. Even jute's share was not quite substantial. Nor was jute cultivation around the late fifties or early sixties an exceptionally profitable business; for, (i) jute is an alternative to, and cannot be double-cropped with, *aman* or *aus*; (41) (ii) the real costs of cultivation of rice and jute are quite similar; (30; 51, pp. 9-10), (iii) the yield per acre of jute in 1959-60 was over 50% higher than that of rice (36), but rice-price was around 33% higher.<sup>20</sup> Thus on the whole our analysis so far should not be vitiated by the failure to take note of other crops than rice.

If we now apply two other criteria, namely, possession of one plough and a pair of bullocks it again appears that the dividing line falls at the same place; families having 5 acres or less of land do not, on the average, own the minimum 'equipment' for cultivation.

The final yardstick, namely, the proportion of family to hired labour, tells the same story; it is found that less than a third of the 5-7.5 acre farms employed a farm worker on a permanent basis; thus income from exploitation i.e. the ratio of permanent workers to family labour, barely



exceeds one-tenth of the total income for the group as a whole.

A closer inspection of the holdings belonging to the same size-group reveals that income from exploitation for farms that do employ at least one outside labourer does exceed 25%; for, the average number of family workers is under three. This sub-group, therefore, may be taken out of the middle peasant class.

#### Demarcation Line

We have now to establish the demarcation line between the middle and the rich peasant. Of course, the latter produces much more than his nutritional requirements, generally has more than one plough and a pair of bullocks. His distinctive features from an economic point of view are: (i) his participation in other income-generating activities like money-lending, trade, etc., (ii) his dependence on hired farm workers so that through exploitation he earns at least one-fourth of his income from land and (iii) his annual income considerably exceeds expenditure. We do not have at our disposal any statistical data on the extent to which rich peasants actually indulge in non-agricultural activities; but it is fairly well-known that they do. (51, p. 67ff). Again, we do not have any information on the proportion of income saved by different size-groups of landholders. Thus we are obliged to fall back on criterion (ii) above to separate the rich from the middle peasant. It is seen that for groups holding 12.1 to 25 acres and over 25 acres, the shares of agricultural income from the exploitation of permanent farm workers are respectively 33% and over 45% whereas it is under one-quarter for the 7.5 to 12.5 acre group. The first two clearly deserve to be called rich peasants. As for the third group nearly one-half employs some worker(s) so that the income of this half from exploitation exceeds the stipulated maximum. This half as well as the small fraction of the 5 to 7.5 acre group where a similar situation prevails, should accordingly be termed rich peasants; the number of such

families was 0.4m. or 6.3% of all agricultural families.<sup>21</sup> The following table summarizes the division into classes of the agricultural population on the basis of the Agricultural Census data:

	<i>Agricultural labourers</i>	<i>Small peasants</i>	<i>Middle peasants</i>	<i>Rich peasants</i>
Size of landholdings	up to 1 acre	1 to 5 acres	5 to 12.5 acres	12.5 acres or more
Total number of families ('000)	1810	3300	736	216
Percentage of all families	28.1	51.0	11.3	9.6

Notes: 1) As explained in the text not all holdings with 5 to 12.5 acres belong to the middle peasant class.

2) Rich peasants include semi-feudal elements who do not take part in any way in cultivation work; we are obliged to lump them together in the absence of adequate data.

We may now briefly indicate some other comparable attempts at a stratification of the East Bengal peasantry. (a) It is said in a recent article: "On the basis of a simple survey, the Bengal Land Revenue Commission of 1940 estimated that probably 50 per cent of the agricultural families (consisting of 5 members) in East Pakistan possess less than 2 acres of land and only 23 per cent possess land over 5 acres. According to the report of the same commission, the size of a holding which provides a reasonable standard of comfort for an average family in most parts of East Bengal is: probably 5 acres" (1). (b) R. Sobhan relies on the personal experience of Mr A. H. Khan, once the Director of the Comilla Academy. The village population is divided into the semi-landless or landless farmers holding up to 1 acre, middle farmers having 1 to 7.5 acres and the surplus farmers with over 7.5 acres; the last group having some surplus land or money is comparable to the Russian Kulaks. There are not many details on how the dividing lines between the three groups (51, p. 67ff) were chosen. (c) Raquibuzzaman's study on the marketed farm surpluses shows that in East Pakistan in 1960

all groups holding up to 4.9 acres of land produced less foodgrains than they consumed. There was a clear surplus for the groups having over 7.5 acres. There is some apparent inconsistency in the data for the 5 to

7.5 acre group; while its consumption rises, its production falls in relation to the next group below, so that the deficit actually widens (48). In our view the sub-sample chosen by the author from the NSS returns was much too small and may have been responsible for this 'freak'. But his findings on the two extra groups of landholders do accord with our own findings on the class structure.

#### The Rural Rich

Before discussing their economic position it may be worthwhile to show how the rural rich completely dominate the political scene in rural East Bengal. The Basic Democrats to whom was entrusted the power and responsibility to run local governments, to whom all civil servants, including the police, within the respective areas turned for guidance and most important of all, who had an important say in the management of local finance, came almost exclusively from the upper sections. Successive surveys of the Basic Democrats in 1959, 1961 and 1964 clearly showed this. Their educational qualification was much above the average; hardly was there any illiterate among them while a good one-sixth were at least



matriculates. Occupationwise, 82% were agriculturists in 1961 but the proportion declined to 77% in 1964; perhaps many of them began to earn more from trade and other sources. Two-thirds of them had 7.5 acres or more, and over two-fifths possessed 12.5 acres or more. As for income, 55% earned at least Rs 3000 p.a., 35% at least Rs. 4000 in 1959; the corresponding proportion towards the end of tenure of the same group of BD's, increased to 66% and 44% respectively. Clearly they managed to improve their own lot. The average income of a Union Council Chairman was as high as Rs 6950, higher than that of any civil servant up to the Thana level. No wonder that they wielded so much power within their own localities. (49, pp. 251-3; 51, p. 79ff).

Let us now go into the economic activities of the rural rich as a whole. The disparities in income are quite large. In 1963/64, according to the NSS, while the bottom tenth of the rural population had an average family income per month of less than Rs 50, the top one per cent had more than Rs 650. (6). Three years later the highest income-group recorded an average income 30 times that of the lowest.<sup>22</sup> (36). The lower income groups are obliged to dissave, only the better-off families manage to save. Total personal savings, according to Bergan, amounted to Rs 207 crores in 1963/64, that is, the saving rate was 12% of gross personal income. This is, on the whole, a pretty high rate compared to that in West Pakistan where inequalities were much greater. (6). But the East's rate may have been exceptionally high. For, the previous year was a bad one for agriculture and 1963/64 was quite a good one. The NSS data for 1966/67, show that personal incomes were lower than consumption in rural East Pakistan, implying a negative savings rate; the richer sections, however, had a positive savings rate of around 10% (36). This last one is even more of an abnormally bad year; in the absence of further data on 'normal' years it is, unfortunately, not possible to give

a balanced picture of personal savings. However, even in the bad years upper income groups did save.

Whatever be their actual savings rate, the rural rich do not invest significant amounts in a productive manner. The total annual income of the top 20% in the rural areas was as much as Rs 743 crores in 1963/64 (6) and could not have been any less in real term for the decade as a whole; the monetary magnitude should surely have gone up in view of the rising prices. But private investments in agriculture in 1969-70, a very good year for crops, totalled a measly Rs 55 crores for the whole country; (39, p. 87) the share of the Eastern province is not known, but was not likely to exceed Rs 20 crores given the much higher tempo of modernization in West Pakistan's agriculture. Assuming that all these investments were made by the top one-fifth of the rural families, even then the investment rate of this group comes to less than 3% of income. The situation was probably much worse in most of the earlier years. In 1964/65, another bench-mark year for which we have data, private investment in agriculture, including irrigation, was a paltry Rs 23.5 crores for the whole country; (40, p. 286) it is doubtful whether more than Rs 10 crores of this sum was spent in the East.<sup>23</sup> By contrast a far greater amount, Rs 85 crores in 1964/65 and Rs 70 crores in 1969/70, was devoted to private housing, in rural and urban Pakistan (39, p. 67; 40, p. 286).

An indirect proof of our main contention is the small number of pumps and other agricultural equipment sold in East Pakistan during the last decade. The number of low-lift irrigation pumps rose from 1367 in 1960/61 to 6000 in 1967/68, which is still small. The number of power pumps was as high as 18000 in 1969/70 and 1000 new tubewells were installed during the Third Plan (39, p. 275ff), but most of these were undertaken by the public-sector Water and Power Development Authority. Even these facilities were not fully utilized. In fact, the rural rich invested most of

their savings in buying up extra land, moneylending, trade, etc. without ploughing back much into land.

So far we have seen that the rural rich (i) possess a good deal of land without being feudal lords of the classical type, (ii) hire permanent workers as well as casual ones, to a significant extent, (iii) do save a good part of their income, but (iv) make little productive investments to modernize agriculture and raise production. Clearly, the present phase is a watershed between feudalism and capitalism in agriculture. For those who regard employment of wage labour as the sole criterion the rising number of agricultural labourers is a sufficient proof that capitalism is developing in the East Bengal countryside. Did not Lenin call it the "principal manifestation of capitalism"? (26, p. 237). The spread in the use of fertilisers, insecticides, etc. may be construed as another pointer in the same direction. Given the present tendencies and with greater encouragement from the government in the way of bigger and more irrigation schemes, the present leaders of the rural society will increasingly resort to capitalistic methods and transform the traditional practices of cultivation, provided also that the oppressed majority does not raise the ugly monster of a revolution.

Yet the East Pakistani rural rich have themselves done very little. Nor have they gone in for commercial agriculture on a significant scale. Another concomitant of capitalism, namely, the splitting up of the peasantry into two poles—one with and the other without land—is not proceeding fast enough, since the major part of land still remains with the small peasants. For all these reasons it is better to look for an intermediate category. Lenin had thought of one, the Labour Service System, (LSS) which preserves most of the characteristics of the earlier epoch. The abolition of serfdom in 1860 put an end to serfdom in Russia, and for quite some time the LSS and capitalist farming existed side by side even within the same farm. The distinction between the two can easily be



understood from our preceding discussion: the LSS has all the characteristics of a society in transition from the feudal to the fully capitalist era. Moreover under LSS the employee is 'personally dependent' on the employer; under capitalism he is not.

On the other hand, the term LSS may not be particularly apt for E. Pakistan. First, the LSS followed on the corvée system which was quite different in nature from the *zamindari* method of exploitation. Second, the Russian employers under the LSS were ex-landlords still possessing vast tracts of land. The East Bengali rural rich are nowhere as rich as the formers' bailiffs even. They themselves were rarely *zamindars* of the old and typically come from the various quasi-*zamindar* groups. Consequently, we opt for the term made popular in the Leftist political circles of Bengal, East and West, namely, the *jotedar*.<sup>24</sup> Everyone agrees that the latter is the product of a transitional society, is among the top landholders in the village, has a part of his land cultivated by *bargadars* and another by hired workers, invests relatively little in agriculture, engages in trade, money-lending, etc. thereby perpetuating the semi-feudal modes of exploitation. These *jotedars* constitute the ruling class in the countryside.

Accordingly, the rural milieu in East Pakistan should be called a *jotedar*-dominated society. Many eminent writers, starting from the Russian economist Chayanor (12) to Daniel Thorner (53) in the present day, would prefer to characterize it as a 'peasant economy' simply because of the numerical preponderance of

small peasants. In our limited understanding of the question it seems that those writers were having at the back of their minds an analogue to the era of free competition in industry when 'petty producers of commodities' were the rule rather than the exception that they are in the modern world of monopolies and cartels. Such a free competition model would presuppose that the economically and technically superior peasant should be able to expand at the cost of the inefficient ones. Most studies on comparative productivity of small vis-a-vis large farms in E. Pakistan indicate that the opposite is perhaps true (22) and yet it is the large farms that tend to expand by virtue of their size, economic power and extra-economic pressure. As far as it is known to us, it is paradoxical that only in post-war Poland ruled by the Communists does a 'peasant economy' really exist because the State has eliminated the known hurdles in the path of smaller farmers who face more or less the same objective conditions as the bigger ones. Post-Occupation Japan may be another example, but the present writer does not know enough to form a judgment.

Coming back to the *jotedar* class in East Pakistan it is worth noting that it has retained its sub-feudal character in another way. It has proved to be singularly incapable of asserting itself on the national scene; lack of entrepreneurial vigour on its part may provide a part of the explanation. Anyway, the country has always been in the control of West Pakistanis for whom the *jotedars* act as agents; a good number may have voted against Ayub in the Presidential elections of 1964, but their dependence on the Central Government had never been less than total. In return they were allowed to exploit the peasantry almost unimpeded. Rural credit and the Rural Works Programme, which we shall examine, provide two examples of how the government through its activities or lack of them, helps strengthen the *jotedars'* hold on the peasant masses.

<sup>16</sup> For the most satisfactory analysis to this day see Hinton (21, ch. 28-32, 61).

<sup>17</sup> On the bewildering variety of definitions prevalent among the Soviet Marxists in the 1920's an interesting description is given by M. Lewin (28, ch. 2-3).

<sup>18</sup> These criteria have been discussed at length by the present writer elsewhere (10).

<sup>19</sup> Studies relating to India and West Pakistan have clearly demonstrated an almost continuously increasing consumption of cereals per capita as income or expenditure levels go up. We are confident that this is true for East Pakistan as well, though we have no supporting evidence at hand.

<sup>20</sup> Manufacturers' costs of raw jute averaged Rs 22 per maund, according to Mallon, (30, p. 65). Retail price of coarse rice was Rs 26 per maund; other varieties must have cost somewhat higher. (42, p. 283).

<sup>21</sup> These two groups are, probably, distinctly worse off than the two top-most size groups. Following Hinton, one could equally classify them as middle-rich rather than rich (21, ch. 61).

<sup>22</sup> One should not jump to the conclusion that disparities were increasing.

<sup>23</sup> In the text we have used Papanek's figures for private investments which are considerably higher than later official estimates as reported by M. Akhlaqur Rahman (43, p. 74). The latter, unfortunately, gives no indication of investment in agriculture.

<sup>24</sup> One sociologist has discovered a bewildering variety of meanings of this same word in different districts of West Bengal and concludes that the Leftist understanding of it has no basis at all in real life. (7). This is the strangest argument the present author has ever encountered. In poetry as well as in scientific discussions a commonly used word often acquires a new dimension; if the ideas conveyed by it have some value either in understanding 'reality' or in promoting analysis, then such coinage is amply justified.

(To be concluded)

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# Panic in Belgrade

BAREN SEN

YUGOSLAVIA has not only six republics and two autonomous regions but also as many nationalities. Its Federal Assembly includes a special "Chamber of Nationalities". Yet the country has its problems involving the question of nationalities.

The question of nationality is principally a problem of solving the contradiction between the chauvinism exercised by the economically stronger nationality and the local nationalism of other nationalities. It is the propertied class (i.e. feudals, or bourgeoisie or both) that exercises the chauvinism or leads the revolt under the banner of local nationalism. The question of nationalities that exists in the oppressed countries and nations is a legacy left behind by their colonial or neo-colonial past. The same problem exists even in capitalist and imperialist countries. The roots of this question had existed in the feudal society but it took the magnitude of an acute problem in capitalist society. That is, the question of nationalities is thrown up by a social system which de facto legalises exploitation. The ruling classes of various nationalities never want to solve this problem as such a measure would be against their interests and opposed to their 'divide and rule' tactics of exploitation.

The people of any country or nation can change this state of affairs, can even change such a social system provided they unite and fight. But in order to achieve that the people must essentially have territorial integrity, national independence and sovereignty. The absence of any one of these fundamental essentials dampens and delays the struggle for securing socialist society—a society free of exploitation. If the people fail to attain and preserve their territorial integrity national independence and sovereignty, they lose everything—even the right to determine their own

future and a society of their choice.

Having secured these three fundamentals and having overthrown the ruling classes under the dictatorship of the proletariat, it becomes possible to solve the contradictions that give rise to the question of nationalities. This can be achieved only during the period of socialist construction. In short, unless the working people, under the dictatorship of the proletariat, rise to overthrow their respective and overall feudal-bourgeois oppressors, the gnawing question of nationalities i.e. the contradiction among the people cannot be successfully and satisfactorily solved for a lasting period. The process continues throughout the period of socialist revolution.

Yugoslavia's socialist construction has evidently gone awry. Its present prime minister, Biyedich, on taking office last year, said on July 31 that Yugoslavia's main ills were a high rate of inflation, rising cost of living, insolvency of enterprises, high level of foreign debts and deficits in the trade and balance payments. It is now clear that the question of nationality is still a very live problem in Yugoslavia. There has been unrest in the state of Croatia. The nationalist upsurge in Croatia—one of the original States to form Yugoslavia—has been strong enough to threaten the territorial integrity of the country. The Croatian rebel secessionist leaders have called for a separate republic.

President Tito initially did not take any preventive action for what he described as lack of sufficient unity in the Communist Party. Subsequently, certain leaders of the Croatian Communist Party were "removed"; Tito also pointed out that workers had been resigning from the five party organisations as a mark of "resentment at being asked only to work but rarely allowed to speak". Fight-

ing for the cause of territorial integrity Tito called on the working class "to become the basis, the factor to be felt in the entire country".

The Croatia rebels are mainly nationalist-minded students and intellectuals who have been active in various newspapers and associations with a distinctly nationalist attitude. In Croatia, already 10 student leaders have been charged with subversion and another 250 detained. The newspapers known for their out-and-out nationalist views have been banned. The situation has been so serious that President Tito, during a frank discussion with the trade union leaders, said that Yugoslavia was on the brink of a catastrophe. He is also reported to have mentioned that "had he not intervened in time there would have been shooting within six months and, perhaps even a civil war". He told the trade unionists: "I have said that I would never allow this, that I would rather use the ultimate means, and you know what the ultimate means are". The reference was undoubtedly to deployment of the army.

Without minimising the internal strife, Tito himself voiced concern that the domestic problems have encouraged outside forces—an obvious reference to Russia and the Russian army. Concern about foreign intervention has been growing in the minds of Yugoslav leaders for quite some time. Col. Bubanj, chief of the General staff of the Yugoslav Peoples' Army, had in a speech in July 1971, pointed out that there was serious danger of armed aggression from outside. This concern was provoked by Russia and her partners under the Warsaw Treaty, who held military manoeuvres very close to the Yugoslav border. The Yugoslav newspaper *Borba* wrote that the manoeuvres in this area and intentions behind holding them have unmistakably demonstrated that the show of force on the right flank of the continent of Europe and its surrounding areas was prompted by deeper motives and broader perspectives than those over the Near East question. Another daily, *Vjesnik*, published from the



Croatian capital, wrote: "The manoeuvres are not only the reflection of the Middle East crisis, but are in the first place calculated to put pressures on this or that Balkan country".

The Balkan countries, of course, have been living in a state of nightmare since the Russian army's crack-down in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the near-intervention in Poland during the Polish workers' uprising in December 1970.

The threat is so serious that even Brezhnev could not allay the fear by his personal visit to Belgrade in September last year. On November 25 in a joint communique the Rumanian President called for "renunciation of military manoeuvres on the territories of other States" and also for a "ban on setting up new military bases". Also, aware of the collusion by U.S. imperialism during the Russian attack on Czechoslovakia in 1968, President Tito went to Washington in November 1971. Whatever Brezhnev and Nixon might have told Tito, his fear of a Russian interference/intervention remained.

With the burning Croatian problem in hand, the Yugoslavs cannot but feel that the rebel-secessionists might provide the Russians just the opportunity to send troops to Yugoslavia 'to remove the threat to security and peace in the close proximity of the southern border of the Soviet Union.' The Russians' role in converting a part of Pakistan into 'Bangladesh' must have been an eye-opener for Yugoslav leaders and people; the rebel-secessionists also have the advantage of having the Russians close at hand.

The nationalist movement and all that is happening or might happen within the federal state must be viewed strictly as internal affairs of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia's struggle for maintenance of territorial integrity, national independence and sovereignty is a just one, and would undoubtedly be supported by the peace-loving countries and peoples of the world.

*Bihar*

## Elections Again

N. K. SINGH

SO, Bihar is once again going in for that great show of bourgeois democracy — elections. However, this time Her Majesty's Opposition cannot complain of having been taken by surprise. As a matter of fact when the Chief Minister, Mr Bhola Paswan Shastri, tendered the resignation of his 209-day-old Congress (R)-dominated coalition Ministry on December 27, paving the way for President's rule to be followed by the third Assembly elections in Bihar since 1967, nobody was taken by surprise. It was coming for weeks.

The State, it is said, would go to the polls in March and finally be able to overcome the "chronic political instability that has been the bane" of state politics since 1967. In the four years that followed the fourth general election, Bihar had been turned into a wrestling ground: altogether nine different combinations of political parties have tried to rule the State at varying times. The gaps during which a 'constitution' government did not rule were filled by three spells of Presidential rule. One mid-term poll to the Assembly was held in 1969 which, as it became evident, only made the situation worse.

The decision to hold elections in Bihar is a fresh reminder that the real political power in a parliamentary democracy does not lie in the bourgeois constitutional organs but outside the Constitution. Only some time ago when a decision was being taken on elections in the different states, Bihar was specifically excluded. What has forced the ruling party to reverse its earlier decision? Although right from 1969 the case for a fresh poll was clear from the constitutional point of view—the elected Assembly was unable to produce a stable government—the ruling party turned a

deaf ear to it. The constitutional interest was subordinated to the political interest of the Congress, so much so that even after the party was split shaking the loyalties of many Congressmen violently, no election was held.

The latest in the series of shaky ministries was the Bhola Paswan Shastri one, the exit of which ends the mockery of constitutional government in Bihar. Perhaps it was the worst government the state has ever had.

The manner in which Mr B. P. Shastri made his exit was a tit-for-tat story. On his return from New Delhi on December 27, Mr Shastri had publicly announced that he would convene a meeting of the Cabinet the next day and would tender his resignation thereafter. But his bosses were in no mood to allow him even that much of grace and he was obliged to call an emergency meeting of the Cabinet and tender his resignation the same day.

There are a number of reasons behind the fall of the Congress (R)-dominated coalition which had never faced the legislature squarely for a full session. (A peculiar coincidence with the three ministries that Mr Shastri has headed since 1968, has been the virtual eclipse of the State Legislature which did not seem to exist except for the all-too-brief sessions held to maintain the constitutional forms).

The first and foremost reason behind the decision to go to the polls is India's victory in its recent war against Pakistan. But this is the general reason; regionally speaking, one of the main reasons for the failure of the Government was the exit of the CPI from the Co-ordination Committee of the ruling Progressive Vidhayak Dal and its demand for reconstitution of the Ministry as a precondition for support. Another reason was the 'froggy' conduct of smaller PVD partners threatening to part company with the Government if their demand for more ministerial berths was not conceded before the



year (1971) was out. But the most difficult problem for the Shastri ministry was the groupism in the Congress-(R) Legislature Party. The rivals had not only failed to patch up their differences over the selection of party nominees for the allotment of Cabinet seats but also made it impossible for the Government to function. Some of the Congressmen had started campaigning against the leadership of Mr R. J. S. Yadav. Another faction, led by Mr Daroga Rai, a former Chief Minister, had been conducting a signature campaign in support of the CPI's demand for the ouster of Mr B. P. Shastri.

## Clippings

### The Mujib Bahini

There are 8,000 Mukti Bahini men in Khulna and 7,000 in Jessore. Khulna's United Club—headquarters of the 9th Sector just as the 11th Sector has taken over Jessore's Circuit House—might almost be a camp for gentlemen adventurers or of the soldiers of fortune. A young lieutenant sprawls in a chair, sporting a cravat and a striped Regency jacket; the two boyish aides with a grizzled naval officer wear check deerstalkers pulled rakishly over their eyes. But for all the raffish ease of their postures, the bubbling effervescence of conversation through which runs a streak of masculine badinage, the heavy dinner of meat and fish, the United Club is in a state of armed preparedness. Sand bags and rifles loom out of the dark; there are armed guards outside the commander's office; and an officer toys carelessly with a pistol no bigger than a cigarette lighter.

But immediate anxiety centres on the objectives of the Mujib Bahini whose members call it the Mission. It has not, in these western districts, acquired the sinister reputation of Tangail, but the men—one meets them patrolling Jessore's streets after dark in a yellow van—are treated by the police with a respect that is laced, it would seem, with a little

fear. A district official says the Mission was created by the Awami League to ensure its political control over the liberation movement. A member is far more explicit: the revolution for him is not over. It has only begun.

"We have just been through a tremendous armed upheaval", says 22-year-old Ali Ashraf Chowdhury, commander of Jessore's kotwali thana unit, "but it has not changed our national character at all". Chowdhury, a first year political science student from Dacca, is not an arresting figure in his Saxe blue jacket, but he is heard in deferential silence in the crowded eating house. The democratic process is contemptuously dismissed as an instrument of social change. "We have achieved independence, we must fight ourselves".

Loyalty to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is vehemently protested; the Mission claims descent from the 1966 Swadhin Bangla Chhatra Sangathan with which President Syed Nazrul Islam and Captain Mansur Ali were, apparently, both associated. Reports of its following vary. A National Awami Party man puts it at 15,000. But Chowdhury says there is a five-man cell in each of Bangladesh's 65,000 villages operating under a four-member Central Decision Board headed by Siraj-ul Alam Khan from Noakhali. Members are all literate and aged between 15 and 35. Their functions are divided into Organization, Operations and Intelligence. Some activities overlap with those of the Chhatra League and the Students Action Committee, but the Mission's rural cadres and arms stockpiles are separate. They are regarded as the military élite of the Mukti Bahini and have little respect for apolitical nationalist fighters.

Claims such as control of 17 out of Jessore's 20 thanas may be exaggerated, but there is a grim sense of purpose about an organization that subjects even its own night patrols to internal surveillance. "We will never lay down our arms", says Chowdhury, "until our social ideas have been realized".

... Even well-ordered Khulna fears a recrudescence of organized looting or another orgy of reprisal killings. Mr Siddiqui says it is impossible to distinguish isolated bands of Razakars from the Naxalites entrenched in half a dozen villages; some are believed to have coalesced in a marriage of extremes. There are four factions of Marxist-Leninists, and the Mujib Bahini does not deny having fought some of them. (Sunanda K. Datta-Ray in *The Statesman*).

## Left-Handers

Political divorce, Italian style. When the father of Emilla De Puppi died, leaving her around £20,000, she and her husband, tried and trusty Maoists both, wrestled with their political consciences and then decided to contribute £12,000 of the inheritance to the Union of Italian Marxist Leninist Communists.

The party, however, was not amused. Unless you give all, you give nothing, and the couple have been expelled from membership because of the paucity of their donation. The couple resigned first, shamefacedly admitting that they had fallen victim to "bourgeois mentality," but the union rejected the resignations in favour of expulsion on the ground of a "shamefully opportunistic act" and "refusal to complete the collectivisation of their belongings." The capitalists would have at least said thank you. (*The Guardian*, London).

## Letters

### Bangladesh

You have rightly described Mrs Indira Gandhi (25.12.71) as the midwife in the birth of Bangladesh. She has exploited two sets of non-antagonistic contradictions—between the world big bourgeoisie headed by the USA and the big comprador bourgeoisie of West Pakistan and between the comparatively big and poor comprador bourgeoisie of Pakistan living in the



two separate parts of the country.

The relation between the big comprador bourgeoisie of Pakistan and the USA was becoming bitter. The big compradors of Pakistan have accumulated vast wealth by exploiting severely the people of East Pakistan, which they want to invest freely as finance-capital. But historically, none of the world big bourgeoisie will allow anyone to share "free profit". China came to the picture at this stage with a view to intensifying the contradiction within the bourgeois-capitalist camp. The USA, consequently, began to lose her supreme domination over Pakistan. Naturally, it will try to keep Pakistan under her control by a policy of "chain the old dog or set a new one on the old". And Mujibur Rahman, leader of the comprador bourgeoisie and feudal remnants of East Pakistan, is the person who may be relied upon.

On the other hand, under the severe oppression of the colonialist rulers of Pakistan, it was not possible for the people of East Pakistan to think even of a plain living there. They had been trying for a long time to resist the oppression and the bloody grip of the rulers. Sheikh Mujibur came to the people at critical moments with a policy of pacifying their revolutionary fervour. The Awami Leaguers not even stayed with the masses during the war. It is the communist revolutionaries under various groups who were helping the people as comrades-in-arms to stand against the intruders.

The Indian comprador bourgeoisie had been eyeing the raw jute and the profitable market of East Pakistan for investing their finance-capital there. Mrs Indira Gandhi, the alter-ego of the Indian bourgeoisie, stretched her hands to the reactionaries of East Pakistan and help them take over

the movement so that they could supersede the emerging revolutionary forces.

It is a proletarian task to support a national movement, but this does not mean that, as Stalin said, the proletariat must support every national movement, everywhere and always, in every individual concrete case. It means that support must be given to such national movements as tend to weaken, to overthrow imperialism, and not to strengthen and preserve it.

S. S. ROY  
Rajibpur

The revolutionary communist elements in Bangladesh should now be prepared to face a formidably trying time. Let us hope that they will learn the correct lessons from the debacle of the CPI (ML) and will not be provoked into Blanquist tactics—hit-and-run actions by small groups of armed people, or violence exercised by certain individuals against others.

They should by all means preserve and further politically consolidate whatever bases they have built; further strengthen the bond with the toiling poor forged in common struggle; take all practical steps to defend their militants, and to deepen their ideological-political consciousness; make planned efforts to go to the industrial centres and build solid bases among the working class; and most important from the practical needs of the moment, they should conscientiously try to master all forms of struggles and activities without any exception, to combine them expeditiously, and to pass from one form to another in the quickest and most unexpected manner. (They should decisively reject the theory that guerrilla action of peasants is the only form of revolutionary struggle on the Indo-Pak subcontinent.)

The greater part of the Bangladesh countryside has been laid waste by Yahya's marauders. The people need their dwellings rebuilt, their looted properties recovered, their bare necessities of life supplied, their dishonour-

ed sisters rehabilitated, their orphaned boys and girls taken care of. It is a stupendous task requiring concerted effort, for fulfilment. The communist elements of Bangladesh should not dissociate themselves from the solution of these problems by branding them as reformism or economism. On the contrary, they should plunge into this movement of rehabilitation vigorously and wholeheartedly, rousing in the way the initiative and organising talent of the common men and women. That is one of the surest ways of serving the people and winning their confidence.

Let us hope that the communist elements in Bangladesh will make energetic preparations for the completion of democratic revolution in their country, so that when the right moment to deal the decisive blows arrives they will not be found wanting.

DIBAKAR MUKHERJEE  
Howrah

### Where is Bhasani?

Sheikh Mujib has returned to Dacca. But Moulana Bhasani has not. Where is he? Last known, Bhasani was kept in the All India Institute of Medical Science, New Delhi. On November 20, he was fit enough to go out and offer his Id prayers. On January 9 Mr Samad, the Bangladesh Foreign Minister, met him. Yet on January 10 he was just not there at Delhi Airport or even at the Mujib reception meeting at the Delhi Cantonment parade ground. Has his condition deteriorated so much that he was barred from taking his rightful place at these ceremonies, and even from accompanying Mujib to the Ramna grounds?

REBATI SHOME  
Calcutta

### NOTICE

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Business Manager  
Frontier

### CORRECTION

The author of "Whither Bangladesh" (January 8) is Rafiqul (not Safiqul) Hasan. The error is regretted.  
—Editor



## China And Bangladesh

Mr Ashok Rudra in his "China in the Bullshop" (December 25, 1971) has asked a few questions.

He bears a misconception about 'just war'. War against any sort of injustice and unjust cause is a just war. Being unprecise about the definition he puts the question in a puerile fashion. At any time and for any country fighting a war with a view to preserving its sovereignty and independence against the aggression of an oppressive big nation is a just war. At this stage a people's liberation army under the leadership of the working class may temporarily form a united front even with the military power of the existing anti-people regime in order to repulse the external interference and aggression, as China's Communist Party under the leadership of Mao Tse-tung did with the out-and-out reactionary regime of Chiang Kai-shek to resist Japanese imperialism. Of course, this is to be done with certain reservations and maintaining the Party's separate existence, programme, style of work and identity. At such a critical stage, a socialist State can and should assist directly or indirectly even the fascist rulers of a small nation just for its survival against the assault by a bigger reactionary State.

In China's view, the movement in East Bengal was not an anti-imperialist upsurge of the people because the enemy was singled out to be simply the Punjabis, the rulers of Pakistan. The programme of the Awami League contains not a single word of commitment against the imperialist designs and thrusts imposed by the USA on the people. The present movement is likely to drag E. Bengal towards the cradle of imperialism through its Indian outposts.

Mr Rudra is pained that "China is yet to express one word of sympathy for the refugees." 'Sympathy' is a term somewhat alien to Marxism. Marxists express their concern first and then support or oppose an

issue. When Marxism speaks in defence of the interest of the proletariat it attributes some definite values and ideas, particular conditions and characteristics to suffering mankind. Refugees are not certainly endowed with those proletarian virtues. China's reference to the Dalai Lama and his associates in the context of East Bengali refugees is only to hint that the Indian Government is in the habit of extending its charitable (!) hands to some reactionary agents or class-defectors and trying to make political gains out of it. Pouring in of refugees from a country (if they are honestly termed refugees) cannot be the reason for declaring war by the shelter-giving country against that country. If those entrants are termed 'infiltrators', only then a war is reasonable and any able government should know how to deal with them.

Mr Rudra has questioned China's help to the Ceylon Government after an abortive bid there for seizure of state power by some extremists. What happened in Ceylon has been neatly traced by a Ceylone analyst in an article published in *Frontier* (December 11, 1971). Mr Rudra should go through that article and recollect Chou En-lai's comment (as it appeared in the bourgeois press). It was something like this: "The insurrectionists in Ceylon were instigated by some adventurers, counter-revolutionary elements and imperialist agents-provocateurs". Except this I have not seen or heard anything in the official organs of or broadcasts by China. It is to be noted that Chou only criticised the leadership.

Mr Rudra wantonly distorts history when he writes: "...; in South-East Asia the success of counter-revolution in Indonesia owes a great deal to the fact of the Indonesian party following Chinese advice." PKI in 1966 did not ascribe their setback and suffering to Chinese advice. In a self-criticising note, the PKI in 1966 admitted that the reason was their adherence to the path of 'peaceful transition to socialism' which is in direct conflict with China's line and lesson.

Mr Rudra criticises China again in the words: "China's severance of relations with all the leftist parties in India including the CPI (ML) which has not received any moral support during the past one year from China..." It is amusing and unfortunate too that Mr Rudra sees (seeks too?) 'left' (!) parties in India even after observing the 'Bangladesh' bogey and the role of those 'B-teams of the ruling Congress! Is there any legal and official party in India today which raised even a ripple of protest, a murmuring voice of discontent—not to speak of trying to oppose and actively counter—against the intervention of the Indian army in East Bengal? The CPI (ML) is now at the cross-roads and in quandary for so many reasons. For the last one year it has not been able to launch any commendable and worth-mentioning movement. So, at least for the present the less talked about the CPI (ML) the better. Even now China off and on broadcasts the news of strikes, bandhs, etc. in India conducted by the revisionist parties without naming them in order to encourage the mass struggles. Severance with some parties does not necessarily mean severance and alienation from the masses.

SAIKAT SEN  
Calcutta

Mr Rudra condemns China for not supporting the revolutionary national liberation movement of East Pakistan. But China never considered the movement launched by the Awami League to be a national liberation movement. East and West Pakistan constituted one nation—implying an "integral whole". How can a part of a nation achieve 'national liberation'? China has repeatedly said that she would respect the independence and integrity of any friendly and non-superpower country and that "disposition of their own territories or minorities or dependencies was their own affair". She has also clearly maintained that a non-socialist country was fully justified in safe-



guarding national unity, opposing internal split and fighting foreign aggression. So, in spite of Mr Rudra's generous assistance one fails to see any ambiguity in the meaning of 'just war' in terms of China's principles and theory.

It is surprising that Mr Rudra observes no importance and significance of Indian action in East Pakistan worthy of China's concern. The Indo-Soviet pact, Indian action and installation of the Awami League would undeniably lead to the immediate suppression of the emerging revolutionary potential. Moreover the presence of a super-power, China believes, would also result in the growth of political tension in the region. Politically supporting the revolutionary potential would have exposed it, while actively helping its growth in the initial stage (as Mr Rudra suggests) would have been counter to all principles of revolutionary internationalism. China extends her support to a revolutionary movement only when it gains a broad popular base and when a nucleus of the communist party develops, strong enough to fight the reactionaries to an extent. It is because of its regard for 'international proletarian revolution' that China is reserved in her reaction even to 'revolutionary' but minority movements. It is indeed ridiculous to suggest that China should have supported Mujib as he was less anti-communist than Yahya Khan.

Mr Rudra suggests that China's domestic progress is due to mass participation in implementing policies and its diplomatic failure in foreign affairs is because the masses having no knowledge of foreign affairs can offer no 'correctives' to the policies framed by ill-informed bureaucrats. If ill-informed, one fails to understand how the Chinese could consciously 'sell the revolution'. Does not opportunism presuppose proper grasp and analysis of the prospects of a situation? Moreover, the question of 'correctives' by the people would arise only if the actions of the 'bureaucrats' contradict the princi-

ples guiding the policies. Mr Rudra claiming greater knowledge of foreign affairs than the Chinese, has failed to point out any such contradiction. Then how is China 'opportunistic'?

NEEL  
Delhi

Petty-bourgeois intellectuals, especially of the so-called leftist variety, believe in big talk and do not understand that if China had condemned West Pakistan for reducing East Bengal to a colony, either publicly or privately, that would have neither created subjective conditions for a revolution in East Bengal nor turned the bourgeois leadership of the so-called liberation movement into revolutionaries overnight. The exploitation of neo-colonies by imperialism or of colonies by neo-colonies is nothing new.

In India the Centre's investment in, or allocation of funds for, five-year plan outlays to certain States is much lower than what they deserve on the basis of population, territory or earning of foreign exchange. This is exploitation by the neo-colonial central regime. Let any of the Indian States try to secede on this ground and you will find how humanitarian Indira Gandhi is!

When India intervened in Bangladesh it was hailed as 'liberation' but if China had done so it would have been 'rape'. Then the Seventh Fleet would not have been quiet. India, Burma, Ceylon, social-imperialism and the revisionist camp and the imperialists would have backed the murderous military regime not to make it less murderous but to make it more murderous. This is not fantasy. But to join the chorus involves less risk while criticising ourselves and our government needs guts.

ABC  
Bombay

I have just read "China in the Bullshop". Alas! What a fall! We would not like to enter into an argument because "China in the Bullshop" has come out only after a particular line of thinking has gained

the upper hand. What a tragic role for the so-called ultra-left intellectuals of our country in recent years. And—it is our fortune or misfortune—all in the pages of *Frontier*! First, Charan Gupta, second, Rafiqul Islam, third, Ashok Babu. Definitely he has taken an intelligent line; on the one hand back the CPI (ML) and on the other defame and distort the Chairman and his comrades.

We feel the absence of Sasanka (Saroj Dutta of Deshabrati).

Dear Editor, Sir, just by publishing all these you are exposing these gentlemen, but are you not practising too much of liberalism?

PABITRA BHATTACHARYA  
Calcutta

## Durgapur Explosion

The *Statesman* of January 3 reported that "the 31.5 MVA transformer of the 'A' zone substation intended to supply power to FCI exploded immediately after commissioning". The Staff Correspondent further mentioned that this energisation of equipment worth Rs 17 lakhs was due to a "murky deal" by a senior official. A judicial inquiry was instituted by the then Board of Directors to look into the purchase of below rated capacity and faulty equipment. Incidentally, a reference is invited to a letter captioned "Durgapur" dated 27.9.69, published in your weekly, a letter captioned "Corruption and UF" published in *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, a week before, which was also published as a news item in *Darpan* regarding the purchase of the faulty equipment, and the way in which the shady deal hatched was being hushed up by the administration.

The prediction, based on technically justified ground, of your correspondent has come true.

A. K. BOSE, A. GANGULY  
Durgapur

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