

frontier

Vol. 5: No. 13

JULY 8, 1972

PRICE: 35 PAISE

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PRINTED AT MODERN INDIA PRESS,
7, RAJA SUBODH MULLICK SQUARE,
CALCUTTA-13 AND PUBLISHED WEEKLY
FOR GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS (P) LTD.
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AFTER THE SUMMIT

AFTER Simla, where the climate was fine and tempers unfrayed, the two problems which the two powers were very keen to solve remain—Kashmir and the Pakistani prisoners of war. India made a concession by not insisting on a package deal including Kashmir. In any case, the package that Mrs Gandhi had in mind was too big to be accepted. The problem of Kashmir is on two levels—the cease-fire line and the question of self-determination. On the first level, the question can be solved or kept in abeyance by the two governments discussing to eternity whether the present line can be converted into an international line. The question of self-determination, as the term implies, should be decided by the people, though this is not always so—in Bangladesh it was decided by foreign intervention. But over the years it has been proved that a military solution is beyond the capacity of Pakistan. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. As for the people of Kashmir, it seems that, in view of the massive presence of the Indian army, they can do very little. So, that is that. Whether, after the decisive defeat in East Pakistan, the people in West Pakistan will continue to yearn for Kashmir is uncertain. But there will be other shadows, of powers who believe in fighting wars by proxy—and Aksai Chin may hit the headlines again. There will continue to be a tantalising connection between Kashmir, Tibet, the Indo-Soviet Treaty and the massive concentration of the Russian army along the Chinese border. Even if the Americans bomb Vietnam to rubble, and the blockade continues, there will be no reduction of Russian forces along the Chinese frontiers. Such is the dialectics of social-imperialism. Kashmir, though not in the immediate future, will still play a role in power politics.

The Pakistani boys in Indian hands will not be able to go home for some time. But Mr Bhutto is getting back captured territory, about 5,000 square miles in Sind, Kutch and Punjab. This he will be able to flourish before his people, Roman style. As the tensions lessen, with the welcome resumption of communications and trade and if and when Islamabad recognises Bangladesh, the Pakistani prisoners and the Bengalis in Pakistan will be allowed to get home. What about the Biharis in Bangladesh?

It has been announced that everything will be subject to bilateral negotiations, without resort to force. A nice thing indeed. But who

does not know that things being what they are, we are all susceptible to foreign advice, persuasion and pressure? It is in the interest of

both the Soviet Union and the USA that a viable Pakistan begins to co-operate with India and Bangladesh for security in South Asia.

Prayers At Madurai

In bending over backwards to convince New Delhi that it has no intention to overstep the limits of parliamentary politics, the CPM has fallen flat at its ninth congress in Madurai. The political resolution, drafted by the party's central committee at its previous session in, of all places, New Delhi, which was perhaps meant as a gesture to the Union Home Ministry that the party has no exceptionable designs, has been endorsed by the congress without any amendments worth mentioning. If any dissidence was voiced behind closed doors it was not allowed out. On the other hand, by commissioning the old war-horse, Mr B. T. Ranadive, to pilot the resolution the leadership sought to nip all speculations that under his patronage new differences have developed in the party over the tactical line. It fell to his lot to silence all doubters who felt that the party was wrong in supporting the Prime Minister's candidate in the Presidential election or in tarring the Soviet Union and China with the same brush.

Equally significant were the daily noises created outside the conference by the party general secretary, Mr P. Sundarayya, who was ably assisted by Mr Promode Dasgupta. Mr Sundarayya's mission was to explain the obscure points lest the resolution should give unintended offence to New Delhi. He explained how a government could take to semi-fascist methods without being semi-fascist and how a government could remain democratic in some States while turning undemocratic in some others. In order that the boycott of the West Bengal Assembly and the Assembly by-elections may not be considered as proof of the party's decision to

abjure the parliamentary path it was announced that the party would participate in Lok Sabha by-elections; as if those who can rig assembly by-elections will keep quiet to enable the CPM to win the by-elections to the Lok Sabha.

Through all this an attempt to mollify New Delhi is clearly discernible. The draft resolution itself was a signal for moderation; it had scrupulously avoided any reference to a developing political crisis signs of which had been noted by the party in its earlier political documents. This meant, if anything, that the party was about to water down its militancy. Now it is clear that the slogans to mobilise the masses will also be changed; West Bengal will cease to be the colony that it has been for the past three

years, and the Centre's attitude to the State will no longer be considered discriminatory or in any way different from that to other States. In a sudden flash of wisdom the party has discovered that to talk of the right of self-determination of nations and nationalities is to help the disruptive forces of narrow nationalism and chauvinism. This should disabuse New Delhi of any suspicion that the CPM may clandestinely work for an independent West Bengal, taking its cue from Bangladesh, or support demands for self-determination if raised in other States like Jammu and Kashmir, and Tamil Nadu. Whether the Centre will now condescend to accept the CPM as a party of the Establishment will be known in the course of time. Its threats of stern action have worked havoc with the CPM policy, and it may choose to put on the screw tighter. In another country another leader is advising the cooperative opposition parties to re-paint their sign-boards and join his party. New Delhi does not appear entirely incapable of emulating this example; it may feel encouraged by the upshot of the Madurai congress.

DMs' LIB

The district magistrates of West Bengal are sore that they are not given the chance to write confidential character rolls of the engineers and doctors in their districts. It appears that in 1964 their power to write the CC rolls was shortened and since then, according to them, the engineering and health services in the districts have gone to the dogs. The new government in the State, under the guidance of a civilian governor and a barrister Chief Minister, is thinking of restoring the powers to the DMs.

The ostensible rationale is that the districts lack coordination, that the DMs do not know anything about the engineering and health projects of their districts and when the projects are not carried through, it is hard to

pin down the officer responsible.

This of course is nonsense. For coordination of works in the districts there is a huge secretariat in the State capital. The DMs need not know anything about engineering and health projects. Because, for one thing, they do not have the foggiest idea about engineering and medical affairs; the less they poke their blue noses into these matters, the better for the people of the districts. And if the CM wants to have the pleasure of passing the blame on to somebody to keep his conscience clear, the Superintending Engineers or District Medical Officers may as well keep him happy. There is no need to blame one single fellow for everything in the district.

As it is, the practice of sending

green IAS officers to take charge of the districts is bad enough; in the good old British Raj, when this business of coordination was in its perfect state, the districts were used to being run by experienced people and not by upstarts, just trained to be so in Mussourie. Moreover, it is preposterous to make one man look after everything—policing, revenues, education, health, engineering, sports, food, not to speak of things like prize distribution and inauguration of flower or cattle shows. As a result, the DMs do nothing in the district, except worrying or, when it does not pay, drinking. If the DMs were capable and enterprising, the tax arrears would not have become so stupendous or the land records so utterly chaotic. They cannot do what they are asked to do; but they must demand more work to do.

Normally, the awful state of public enterprises under the civilian officers should have wisened the CM and the

Governor here before they proposed to make the DMs all powerful. They are going against the oft-repeated promises to appoint technical people to head technical departments. But we are not in a normal situation. Our democracy is run by IAS men and their henchmen. And behind their rationale is their feudal attitude. The DMs' proposed lib from the smallest possible fetters is an attempt to perpetuate the feudal mode of administration, where the emperor appoints his satraps to run local units any way they like. Decentralisation of power or making competent men share responsibilities takes away grandeur from the regal posts which the district magistrates hold today. Mr Raju of Andhra Pradesh vintage was rather modest in demanding that all officers in the districts be called personal assistants to DMs. What he had in mind was to make them personal serfs to DMs. Which suits the government fine—the CM then can consider himself a mini-emperor.

as they know how the levies affect the general price level and the burden is shifted on to their fragile shoulders.

An interesting aspect of the new budget, however, is its effort to rope in the rural rich through stamp duty, public cess and the revised land revenue. The kulaks in other States have a greater fiscal burden. But their West Bengal counterparts have been treated with leniency though the green revolution is supposed to have blessed the State for some time and fattened their income. But a difficulty here is the inadequacy of land records which will enable the kulaks to evade the already porous fiscal net rather easily.

The budget's main lacuna, however, is its failure to give a direction to the State's future development. Radical reforms, eradication of unemployment and other leftist cant that figure in the speeches of some Congress leaders are absent in the budget speech. Perhaps the reality of being in office has had a sobering effect on the Finance Minister and deflated the high hopes that still exist among the more youthful members of the Congress.

A major portion of the additional revenue will be used up for repaying the non-plan Central assistance received last year and for relief purposes. This and the growing curb on the overdraft facilities and pruning of the RBI borrowing have seriously limited the State's ability to accumulate funds even for basic needs, far less to pay for the promised heaven. Other sources for mobilising surpluses are there. But these call for changes which might spell the doom of the regime itself. Naturally the Finance Minister is unwilling to do that.

Budget, 1972-73

If the fiscal provision is any index of the State Government's new thinking, then the final West Bengal budget for 1972-73 will certainly dampen the spirit of those 'radicals' who had been talking about socialism, Indira style. It gives out nothing new or dynamic. Though the budget does not touch things having a direct bearing on the purse of the poor it could neither suggest any mechanism that would promise growth and effectively reduce the present inequalities. The Finance Minister himself has confessed this, though he has tagged a vague future promise to it. The

State Government faces a deficit of Rs 13.36 crores in the current year alone, over and above an inherited balance of Rs 23.59 crores from the earlier budget. The government proposes to meet this gap by collecting Rs 10 crores from additional taxation, which means a deficit of Rs 3 crores in the current year. But the overall gap will be much larger if the spillover is counted—the total comes to about Rs 26 crores.

As the scope to impinge on urban income is limited, the fiscal men have spread their dragnet to the rural elite and the conspicuous consumers. Cinema, cabaret and hotel entertainment, precious stones, pearls, furs, cars and similar luxury items will cost more. Taxes on goods vehicles and passenger cars will also be enhanced; the stamp duty is to go up and the public cess too. The list is impressive enough. But the common people can take small comfort from it

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JULY 8, 1972:

Rotting In Jails

A correspondent writes:

For the maintenance of law and order there have been thousands of arrests in this country, particularly in West Bengal, during the past two years and so. After arresting young men for some alleged offences, the police, to cut short the process of law, covered many of them under the PVA or MISA. But it is queer to find that after these young men had been taken under PVA or MISA, the cases against them are neither withdrawn nor are they discharged. Is this dual control maintainable in law?

There is another strange phenomenon. A young man is arrested, but when he gets the bail order passed by a magistrate, before he can come out on bail, he is tagged on to one case after another. Some young men were tagged with as many as 5/6 cases. This peculiar aspect was very prominent when it concerned the members and supporters of the CPI(M) and the so-called Naxalites. As a result, it became impossible for these young men to engage lawyers for their defence because it means quite a sum of money, which is beyond

their reach.

Quite a few young men in jail custody are not told by the authorities why they have been arrested, what and how many cases are pending against them, where they would be tried or if they would be tried at all.

For example, take the case of Ashim Chatterjee. He has been kept in Hazaribagh Central Jail, in a solitary cell with 'dandaberi' (letters). He is not allowed to talk to anybody, he is not provided with the prisoner's ticket, he has not been told what are the cases pending against him and where, he has never been produced before any court anywhere. He cannot defend himself in a court of law and he does not have the resources to engage a lawyer. In short he is rotting in Hazaribagh Central Jail as a condemned man without, as it were, any right to defend himself.

Take the case of Souren Bose. He does not know how many cases there are against him. Sometimes he is taken to Andhra, sometimes to Visakhapatnam and sometimes to Calcutta. Like a shuttlecock he is

being shifted from one place to another. He does not have the resources to deal with all these cases.

Take the case of Santosh Rana. He was produced(?) before the Additional Chief Presidency Magistrate, Calcutta, only the other day and then taken to Midnapore Jail. He also does not know how many cases are pending against him and where and how he will defend himself. He does not know because he does not have the resources.

There are hundreds of cases of this nature.

A political prisoner should get the opportunity to defend himself but in the largest democracy(?) he has no such opportunity if he is not rich enough to engage lawyers to plead for him and move court after court.

Those lawyers who believe in democracy should come forward and defend these young men who today have been branded as enemies of the country but may be accepted tomorrow by the people as heroes. And those citizens who believe in democracy should come forward with contributions and raise funds for their defence. Otherwise a day will come when their own children will not be spared.

China, Vietnam And The Soviet Union

MONI GUHA

TWO questions are baffling the minds of honest people about Vietnam. Why are the socialist countries not directly intervening? Why China and the Soviet Union are not acting unitedly? Naturally, there is widespread despondency and distrust. Some people even say that after all, socialist States care more for their national interests than internationalism. To this widespread, honest confusion, the CPM at its 9th Congress at Madurai has added more grist.

It is better to face the questions squarely.

The Chinese revolution so far as the seizure of nationwide power was concerned, was completed in October, 1949. China did not hesitate for a moment to intervene in Korea in October, 1950, at a time when she could not consolidate her power. Why could China afford to risk such a form of help in 1950? And why can't she do it today? Possibly, this is the crux of the thing which may solve the baffling puzzle. China could afford to risk that form of help in 1950 in Korea only because the socialist camp under the leadership of the mighty Soviet Union was

solidly behind China and in case of necessity the Soviet Union would have come to her aid against the U.S. and other imperialist powers. China cannot afford to risk that form of help today because more than 40 divisions of the Russian Army are poised on the Sino-Soviet border and a few border clashes of serious military nature have already occurred. One should not forget, even for a moment, this fundamental change in the situation. The change is not the "disunity" in the socialist camp, as the CPM wants us to believe. It is a simple case of the

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Soviet Union going over to the imperialist camp. The form of help China rendered to Korea was commensurate with her position then and the strength of the socialist camp. The form of China's help to Vietnam is also commensurate with her position now and the present strength of the socialist world.

How is the form of help by a socialist country determined? It is not determined abstractly or on subjective desire but by the actual strength of the socialist country. When the "Left" Communists, Trotsky, Bukharin etc. of the Russian Communist Party, were demanding immediate intervention in Germany in 1918 to make the German revolution a success, Lenin said, "Actually, however, the interests of the world revolution demand that Soviet power, having overthrown the bourgeoisie in our country, should *help* that revolution, but it should choose a *form* of help which is commensurate with its own strength. To help the socialist revolution on an international scale by accepting the possibility of defeat of that revolution in *one's own* country is a view that does not follow even from the "pushing" theory." (Lenin's *italics*; "Strange and Monstrous"). The "Left" Communists, Trotskyites, accused Lenin as "narrow nationalist". One need not be surprised or shocked when the CPM Central Committee, dancing in the same old tune of Trotsky, accuses China as "nationalist". If China renders such help "accepting the possibility of defeat in" her country that will surely help neither Vietnam nor world socialist revolution. This is the stark reality of the situation. Call it nationalism, but that will not succeed in provoking China and entrapping her in the name of the high-sounding, abstract phrase of proletarian internationalism.

As to the form of help China is giving Vietnam, there is one most important political aspect that should not be overlooked. China cannot send even volunteers, let alone stage direct military intervention if Hanoi does not want it.

Hanoi has more than once declared in unambiguous terms that she does not require any volunteers from China or the Soviet Union. One must read not only the events but between the events. It is not at all a secret that there are advocates of both Peking and Moscow lines in the Vietnamese Communist Party. The Vietnam communists have kept these important questions in the Party postponed for discussion and decision in view of the paramount importance of the war of liberation. When they are all fighting a life-and-death battle, those issues may be kept in abeyance. As such Hanoi does not want to jeopardise her internal unity by appealing for volunteers or other forms of help either from China or from the Soviet Union.

Had China been nationalist or imperialist she would not have cared whether the country concerned wants help or not. She would have intervened for national security, as national security even by domination over the neighbouring countries is permissible in nationalist or imperialist politics. The common border of China with Vietnam runs along the provinces of Yunnan and Kwangsi. Vietnam's defeat and occupation by the U.S. Army would endanger the Chinese position most seriously. As nationalists the Chinese should be more sensitive today to events in Vietnam. As nationalists they were always highly sensitive to events in adjacent States, particularly Korea, Laos, Vietnam and Burma. These countries allow access into China. In 1873, for example, the Chinese fought the French in Tonkin (the north-east region of Vietnam) and gave active support to Annamite troops opposing the French. In 1882, 1884 and 1895, the Chinese intervened in Korea, in each case attempting to restore a status quo favouring Chinese influence and indirect domination. Had China been nationalist she would have intervened for her national security, whether Hanoi wanted it or not. But as China is a socialist country she cannot undertake forms of help

other than what she is giving now. If other forms are undertaken that will surely jeopardise the interests of the Vietnamese liberation war. Here lies the limitation of China, set by history, which is not her creation.

Perhaps, it is now clear that what is embarrassing for Hanoi and what jeopardises the interests of the liberation struggle are being demanded by others. Aunties who show more concern than mothers are undoubtedly dangerous.

United Action?

Next comes the question of unity between China and the Soviet Union, so far as the question of sending help is concerned in spite of differences in other spheres. One should try to be reasonable and objective, and not air "pure" and abstract sentiments. Throughout the bitter polemics with the CPSU, China continued to co-operate with the Soviet Union in delivering arms to Vietnam over the Chinese railroads. At no time did China engage in public polemics against Soviet aid. It was only when the Soviet Government insisted that (perhaps in 1963) high-ranking Soviet army personnel should be stationed on the Sino-Vietnamese border at the railheads with their staff to supervise and inspect the delivery of Soviet arms, that China imposed restrictions and a system of checking the Soviet personnel. The Soviet and the bourgeois press made a great fuss over it and the Soviet Union considered it not only an affront and insult, but also an obstacle to the efficient performance of the task of arms delivery to Vietnam. Though historical parallels may not always be sound logic, one can be cited. During the Second World War, British Service personnel and seamen were stationed in North Russia, mainly to bring Allied supplies to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union imposed certain restrictions over their movements and introduced certain formalities. Churchill asked Stalin to withdraw the restrictions. Stalin in his

reply wrote to Churchill: "With regard to the formalities and certain restrictions imposed in our northern ports, mentioned by you, it should be borne in mind that in a zone adjoining the front these formalities and restrictions are inevitable in view of the military situation in which the U.S.S.R. now finds itself." (Correspondence, Vol. I, FLPH, Moscow, 1957).

Was and is China wrong in imposing formalities and restrictions on Soviet personnel "in a zone adjoining the front in view of the military situation" there? It should not be missed that Britain was an ally of the Soviet Union, while the Soviet Union now is not an ally of China. If it was 'inevitable' in dealing with the Allied personnel in the Second World War by a socialist country, it

is doubly inevitable today in dealing with the Soviet personnel by a socialist country.

The question of united action does not arise at all as the aims of the Soviet Union and China are quite different and contradictory. There might be some understanding and co-operation where both the Soviet Union and China may meet each other half-way, so far as the Vietnam question is concerned, and this is being done. Some people unfortunately do not at all understand the significance of united action and understanding and co-operation. Throughout the period of the war against fascism there was mutual help, mutual exchange of opinions etc., but at no time was there any united action, joint command and

inspection of each other's territories. Once Roosevelt proposed a joint command for each of the Far East regions. Stalin rejected the proposal outright. How could there be united action and joint command where the war aim of the Soviet Union was the liberation of the countries from fascist aggression and the war aim of the Anglo-American powers was the defeat of adversaries and stepping into their shoes? How can there be united action and joint command between the present Soviet Union and China where the aim of China is to help the Vietnamese liberate their country, whereas the aim of the Soviet Union is to re-divide the country in her favour in place of America? There should be no lack of clarity on this matter.

The Environmental Destruction Of Indochina*

DAN JACOBSSON

THE war in Indochina is a total war, directed against man and his environment. Villages are being bombed to rubble, the people are contaminated by poisons, crippled and meeting death. The U.S. army is using the most sophisticated weapons, napalm, Daisy-cutters, and plastic bullets which penetrate deeply into the body and are difficult to

locate during an operation.

This is not enough. The U.S. Government is consciously bombing the rice-fields, scraping bare large areas of land and forest and spraying cultivated areas and forests with poisons. Bombs, tractors and poisons are being used to destroy the environment and people can hardly go back to start a new life. This is planned environmental annihilation.

The U.S. army has violated international law and carried out chemical warfare in Indochina.

This environmental annihilation may have far-reaching consequences.

No country in the world has been so intensively bombed as Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Some areas look like a moon landscape. The heaviest bomb weighs 7 tons and the lightest a few ounces. The giant B-52s can carry 30 tons of explosive bombs. Each weighs 225 kg. They are dropped from a height of 10,000 meters. When it is cloudy one can neither hear nor see the plane from the ground. Each bomb blasts open

a hole of 10 meter diameter and 6 meter deep (and spreads 180 sq. m. around the crater).

Besides the B-52s, the U.S. has thousands of attacking planes of various types which drop about a ton and manage to attack several times a day. The tonnage of bombs equals 700 atom bombs, only one of which destroyed the whole city of Hiroshima in 1945.

The Indochinese plains are fertile. Eighty per cent of the population were farmers before the American invasion. The cultivation of rice has a 1000-year tradition in these regions and the whole society has been built around this. Rice cultivation demands a complicated irrigation system with canals and dams. After the U.S. bombings these fields will be useless. The greatest part of the bombing during 1965-1970 was directed against the cultivated areas (over 90 per cent). Many of the bombs are time bombs which work as mines. When a peasant begins ploughing his fields he may bump

*This article is based on a bulletin published by the United NLF-Groups of Sweden on the eve of the United Nations Environmental Conference in Stockholm. The United NLF-Groups have been working since 1965 for the mobilisation of public opinion against the U.S. war of aggression in Indochina. They staged a demonstration while the UN conference was going on, asking UN delegates to condemn the environmental annihilation of Indochina. About 8,000 people took part in it.

Besides, I have also borrowed some material from Dr Westing's lecture on "The Environmental Destruction of Indochina", delivered in the People's Forum.

into a bomb which kills him and his draught animal. As this happens so often, no one dares to go out in the bombed fields. There are other dangers. The sharp splinters hidden in the ground can tear open their feet and their buffaloes. The bomb craters are usually filled with water. There are now over a few million of these craters. The total of the combined surface area of craters alone created between 1965 and 1971 comes to about 17,000 hectares of land. The water-filled craters are now homes for malaria breeding mosquitoes.

The 'land clearing' or the Rome Plow programme started on a small scale in 1965 in South Vietnam. From 1968 onwards it turned into a large-scale programme. The basic tool is a 20-ton tractor fitted out with a 2,000 kg. 'Rome-Plow' and 13,000 kgs. of added armour. At least five companies of 30 tractors are continually scraping bare everything growing on the ground. Until May 1972 they have scraped bare 4,800 sq. km. of land and clearing 4 sq. km. a day. These tractors have turned forest after forest into real desert.

The main object of this programme is to deny any sanctuary to the enemy. Further, 200 metres on both sides of the roads are scraped bare to stop ambushes.

This programme became more important from the spring of 1971 when the programme of spraying fields and forests with herbicides was suspended.

After these ploughings, weeds have invaded the fields, wide life has been completely destroyed, major erosion has been caused and flood damage increased. Besides, hard wood timbers and rubber trees have been destroyed.

The chemical anti-plant warfare began on a small scale in November 1961. It was then mostly restricted in South Vietnam. In its cover-denial programme the U.S. has sprayed 64 million litres of herbicides on nearly two million hectares of forest land. In its food denial programme it similarly sprayed 8 mil-

lion litres on 0.3 million hectares of crop land. This was discontinued from Spring, 1971, but a large part of the chemicals have been handed over to the puppet government in Saigon.

Twenty-five per cent of South Vietnam's forests have been sprayed. The weak trees die quickly and the strong ones lose leaves only after being sprayed once. But most areas have been sprayed several times. The result is that 100% of the trees have died. In most parts weeds and elephant grass are growing. The grass is rough and the animals never want to touch them. No animal likes to live in these 'artificial environment and natural life is in complete ruin. Restoration can take 20-120 years. Certain types of sensitive trees will never be restored.

There are mangrove forests along the coasts of the Mekong delta. The forests prevent the soil from being washed away by the sea. Besides, they recover lands—10 metre a year. They allow the silts carried by the rivers to deposit there. After the sprayings these forests can never be restored.

The rainfall is 2000 mm. per month in certain areas of Indochina. Vegetation checks the striking power of this heavy rainfall. It develops roots to penetrate deeply into the earth. Now that the forests are gone, the heavy rainfall will wash down the river. There will be floods on a much greater scale. The U.S. has also stepped up sinister attacks on dikes.

The U.S. army has sprayed herbicides on rice-fields. They have sprayed a 3000 sq. km. area of rice-fields with herbicides containing 54% of arsenic. Within 12 hours after spraying the paddy perishes. If a weaker dose is used, the paddy never ripens. The rice-fields are also used to raise fish. The fish get poisoned and die. The peasants try to save their fields by washing them with river water after a spraying mission. The U.S. army has sprayed herbicides on banana trees, jack-fruit trees, sugar-

canes etc. Besides, they have burnt up harvests.

The aggressors have dropped 72,000 tons of chemical bombs on South Vietnam. These bombs explode and later the chemicals are washed into the rivers, lakes and ponds. The water turns brown, smells horrible and one cannot drink it.

The Pentagon emphasises that herbicides do not harm people and animals. We know from the discussion on environment in Sweden that the herbicides used for defoliation do harm women who are going to have children. Investigations from Vietnamese hospitals have shown that many women are giving birth to deformed children. The puppet government of Saigon has tried to conceal these news.

The research students in North Vietnam have found increased cases of cancer of the liver, particularly in areas which have been sprayed with herbicides.

The herbicides contain 2,4-D and 2,4,5-D and these contain other poisonous materials like dioxine, the most poisonous chemical known in the world. Dioxine is slowly penetrating the soil, river-water, fish etc. There are many deaths reported from the areas sprayed. Scientific investigations in Sweden and in the USA have shown that these poisons can even affect the chromosome. The damages can be hereditary. So no one knows how it will affect the people of Indochina.

South Vietnam has a population of 17 million. Now there are six million refugees officially. In 1960 Saigon had a population of 250,000. Now it has swelled to three million people. The slums have grown all around Saigon. Why do people come to Saigon? The answer is simple. The USA and the puppet government in Saigon try to use hunger as a weapon, and bomb out the whole economic and social structure of the villages.

But everyone does not leave. Most of them stay and with the help of the NLF they build underground

schools, hospitals and shelters. Houses are spread out all over the countryside and camouflaged. People are warned before the B-52s start their

devastating raids. People still try to cultivate the fields that have been left. The NLF distributes food to the areas that are bombed.

Sri Lanka

Revolutionaries On Trial

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

IN the glittering ballroom of the Queen's Club, till recently the most exclusive club in Colombo patronised mainly by Europeans, the Criminal Justice Commission has begun its inquiries, charging 41 persons with "waging war against the Queen", and "conspiring to terrorise the government by the use of force" in April last year. While the Commission was beginning its hearings, the island was rocked by the news of spectacular jail breaks from several camps where 16,000 young people have been detained without trial for a year and three months. The most sensational was the break from the camp at the Vidyalandara University, heavily guarded by the army. The detainees dug a 26-ft-deep tunnel, 84 yards in length, winding right through the camp and under the main road; 28 prisoners escaped before the tunnel caved in. This feat has been the topic of conversation everywhere, and even the *Daily Mirror* in an editorial comment said, "we must grant due credit to insurgent ingenuity...for the thrilling escape...and engineering excellence". It is a singular feature of the situation today that there is widespread admiration for the exploits of the "insurgents" who are often referred to, even by the bourgeoisie, as "our village boys".

The Commission to hear the cases is presided over by the Chief Justice, H. N. G. Fernando, and includes four other senior judges. The Government, instead of trying the accused under the normal laws of the land, was obliged to set up an inquisitorial

commission, because it lacked enough evidence to secure convictions. The Criminal Justice Commission Bill, which was rushed through Parliament in April, was criticised in Ceylon as a semi-fascist piece of legislation. It led to a crisis in the ruling Coalition as three members of the Ceylon Communist Party (Moscow) abstained on the bill and were expelled from the parliamentary group. Under the new law, the laws of evidence and procedure will not apply to the Commission and confession even under torture, and confessions by accomplices will be admissible. Those found innocent will not necessarily be released, trials may be held in secret and there will be no right of appeal.

At the opening hearings on June 12 and 13, the Army, Navy and Air Force Chiefs and the Inspector General of Police and other officers of the armed forces read out statements on the April events. The intention no doubt was to horrify the public and create opinion against the accused—for these statements were widely publicised and broadcast over the radio in three languages. However the effect may be the opposite, and one may find a flood of sympathy for the young rebels. For example the statement of an army officer as reported by the *Ceylon Daily News* is given below.

Lt. Col. D. J. de S. Wickremenayake, the co-ordinating officer at Matara during the rebellion, said in his testimony that some of the insurgents showed great bravery and often continued to return fire

after being wounded badly. He said that if the insurgents had been ably led and better trained, it would have taken much longer to put down the movement.

Lt. Col. Wickremenayake said that among the insurgent groups were many girls. Their primary function appeared to be cooking. However they were also seen in support of their male counterparts in attack, carrying explosives in bags slung across their backs.

Lt. Col. Wickremenayake also described a unique weapon improved out of pipes and used by insurgents in skirmishes with Security Forces. He said that it consisted of a pipe about 4 feet long and sealed at one end. This was filled with projectiles and explosive substance and fired by ignition. The weapon had an effective range of 300 yards, he said.

When he arrived at Matara on the 11th of April to assume command, the entire region except the town itself was under the control of the rebels, Lt. Col. Wickremenayake said. All the Police Stations, except Dickwella had fallen into rebel hands. Of the captured stations, Weligama alone had escaped destruction. Telecommunication and power had been cut and the distribution of food disrupted. Public morale was very low, he said. Civil administration was completely paralyzed.

Lt. Col. Wickremenayake described how in a systematic campaign beginning from the South and progressing towards Deniyaya, the Security Forces reestablished the destroyed police stations. He said that the only police station to be recaptured without a fight was Weligama.

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Deniyaya had become the rebel fortress, with road blocks and a heavily guarded bridge. As the Security Forces advanced, the rebels retreated to the Sinharaja Forest leaving a small detachment to engage the Forces.

During their retreat, the rebels caused extensive damage to the CBC Relaying Station on the border of the Sinharaja forest, he said. Of the 41 to be charged, ten are either dead or missing. Only four of the accused are well known persons. They are Rohana Wijeweera, aged 29, who comes from a rural middle class family in the south of Ceylon, an area where, the Communist Party (Moscow) has had electoral successes over many years. Wijeweera's father, who died in 1965, was a Communist Party supporter from 1947 onwards, and was paralysed after an assault by opponents during an election. Wijeweera won a scholarship to Lumumba University, Moscow, in 1960 and started medical studies there. In the Soviet Union he was involved with a pro-Chinese group and on his return to Ceylon in 1964, the Soviet authorities refused him a return visa. He then worked full time in the youth section of the Peking-wing Communist Party led by N. Sanmugadasan. On his expulsion from this party he and other young revolutionaries formed the Janata Vimukti Peramuna (People's Liberation Front). Wijeweera was arrested in March last year, several weeks before the April uprising and has been kept in solitary confinement in Jaffna jail ever since, with no access to lawyers.

The other nationally known JVP

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leader is Mahinda Wijesekera, aged 30, from the same communist stronghold in the south of Ceylon. His father is a retired teacher, and one of this brothers died in the April revolt. Wijesekera, a Communist Youth Leagued since the age of 13, was one of the best known militant student leaders of the years 1967-70. He studied Law, Economics and Sinhala at the Vidyodaya University, but refused to sit for his finals, spending all his time in political activities. He was expelled by the Communist Party (Moscow) in 1970, but campaigned very hard for the United Front government at the 1970 elections. He was a JVP activist while being in the CP and was arrested in March 1971.

Two close relatives of the late Mr Bandaranaike are also among the accused. They are S. D. Bandaranaike, a former Member of Parliament, who was once in the ruling SLFP and later joined and was expelled from the Peking-wing Communist Party. The other is Susil Siriwardena, aged 34, an Oxford graduate and senior bureaucrat of the Ministry of Agriculture, who was Director of the Agrarian Research Institute. Like his famous uncle Solomon Bandaranaike, young Siriwardena, on his return from Oxford, changed his name from Pieris to Siriwardena, gave up European-style clothes for the "national dress" and taught for some years in a school in north-central Ceylon. After he joined the civil service he was placed in charge of the government's Youth Development schemes and came in close touch with the JVP in the course of his work among the youth. He and another young marine engineer named Viraj Fernando were arrested last year, allegedly for financing the JVP.

The rest of the accused are regional JVP leaders and cadres who are little known outside JVP circles. They are mainly rural youth from all regions and all castes.

The "trials" which are expected to begin in August have aroused considerable interest both in Ceylon and abroad. Already the Ceylon Com-

mittee in London which includes people such as Noam Chomsky, Joan Robinson, Rene Dumont, Claude Bourdet, and Tamara Deutscher has issued an appeal through the newspapers in England for funds for the defence of the "insurgents". A number of journalists are expected to come to Ceylon to report what may be a historic political trial. There is much speculation in Ceylon on the nature of the defence and what stand will be adopted at the trials.

On the recent 90th anniversary of the birth of George Dimitrov, the Ceylonese papers gave unusual prominence to articles on Dimitrov. Could it be that even the bourgeois press has been influenced by the discussions that are going on among revolutionary groups in Ceylon about the famous trials of Castro and Dimitrov?

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The Plan Approach

P. KARAN

THE election manifesto of the Indian National Congress issued in February 1971 at the time of the mid-term election to Parliament ended with the exhortation "Poverty must go. Disparity must diminish. Injustice must end." In March 1972, the election manifesto, which was drawn up with the object of securing power in the State assemblies, reiterated, in bolder and bigger letters, "Poverty must go. Disparity must diminish. Injustice must end." During the period of a year between the first manifesto and the second, poverty, disparity and injustice did not seem to have gone, diminished or ended. But so far as the Congress party is concerned it has become richer in terms of power in Parliament and the assemblies—and otherwise.

The latest in the verbal attack on poverty is the document entitled "Towards an approach to the Fifth Five Year Plan" which was drawn up by the Planning Commission, discussed and approved in the National Development Council by the State Chief Ministers and also placed before the All India Congress Committee. This is a document in which the professional planners of Yojana Bhavan seem to have excelled all others in what may be termed as a violent approach to planning. The document borrowed words and ideas wholesale from all the poverty studies (which have become a fashion recently), including the study by Dandekar and Rath, Minhas and the World Bank. It is only natural that when Robert McNamara, President of the World Bank, talks of eliminating poverty, all the lesser mortals in the under-developed countries should immediately echo his feelings, especially when poverty studies themselves need finance from the Ford Foundation and the World Bank.

"The economy now has reached a stage," says the document, "where a

larger availability of resources makes it possible to launch a direct attack on unemployment, under-employment and poverty". It proceeds to say, "there would seem to be a very conspicuous element of historic inevitability in a direct approach to reducing poverty becoming the main thrust of the Fifth Five Year Plan." What is historic about a direct approach to reduce poverty is explained later by the reasoning that the Plan is being formulated by a Government which has won both Parliament and Assembly elections. This is nothing short of a juggling with words to bypass the main issues and cover up the failures of the past. To say that merely because a single political party has won the elections decisively, there is a *historic inevitability* (sic) about reducing poverty in the country is only to make the poorer sections of the people (for whom outwardly the document sheds tears) a pawn in the political power game. Whether the Congress wins the elections or not, the poor have always been with us and it is the very same poor who overthrew the Congress governments in 1967. The approach paper thus tries merely to play to the political gallery, ignoring the fact that it is to be a socio-economic document in line with the political thinking in the country.

The paper is full of commonplace statements on the one hand and violent language on the other. It explains to the nation that poverty is both an absolute and relative concept and the poverty line has to be determined in terms of minimum levels of consumption. The main "attack", it says, will have to be on rural poverty, obviously because Dandekar and Rath (the paper does not acknowledge its debt to them) have discovered that the urban poor are an overflow of the rural poor. More interesting is the finding of the Yojana Bhavan thinkers that the main

cause of abject poverty has been unemployment, under-employment and low resource base of a very large number of producers in agriculture and in service sectors. Hence, once again, the document says that it will be necessary to launch a direct action on the problems of unemployment, under-employment and the massive low resource base to end poverty. This is indeed original thinking, as, so far, unemployment and under-employment were taken to be only different facets of the basic poverty or as the manifestations of poverty. To work out a relationship of cause and effect between unemployment and poverty and to say that if we eliminate unemployment, we can eliminate poverty is merely to indulge in a truism. There is certainly no causal connection between the two except in a literal sense.

Having thus found out the cause of poverty, the document comes to the commonplace conclusion, "in order to improve their lot, the poor would have to have incomes. Incomes will accrue to them, only if they have meaningful employment. However, the generation of employment by itself would not be enough to provide a minimum level of consumption for the poor, unless prices of essential goods such as food-grains including pulses, edible oils, standard cloth, sugar and cooking fuels are stabilised".

Talking about the march towards a minimum level of income, the approach paper, as in the past, lists a set of programmes which are nothing new. It considers the redistribution of land only as a programme supplementing the programme of employment generation. Here again the language of the paper is interesting—"to ensure a limp free march towards the objective of Garibi Hatao operation without further loss of time".

A chapter is devoted in the paper to what has been termed as basic minimum needs. One should be grateful for this fundamental discovery that people require a certain basic minimum for their assistance after the completion of four Five Year Plans.

JULY 8, 1972

The Affairs In Reserve Bank

RAMEN CHATTERJEE

The basic minimum needs listed by the Planning Commission, naturally, are the same old items which have been part of all the previous plans. After making a number of vague statements and promising very little, the conclusion arrived at is that the State governments will be requested to prepare detailed plans in respect of education, medical facilities, drinking water supply, roads and rural electrification. Those State governments which are capable of implementing such programmes have already done so. The fact that Hariana has been able to cover all the villages in the State with electricity is a case in point. Similarly, the high standard of education and literacy in Kerala was achieved without the advice from the Planning Commission. The minimum programme, if it is to be formulated and implemented by the State governments, will have nothing more to offer than what has happened in the past.

The 'Approach' towards the Fifth Five Year Plan is nothing different from the approaches to the plans in the past, except that it ignores the important aspects of a rapid growth in basic and heavy industries, as well as the need to reduce disparities and eliminate them. From Mahalanobis to Mahboob Ul Haq, we have crossed three Five Year Plans. We seem to have reached nowhere. We are still moving towards an approach, though we do not know what we are approaching.

The approach paper is not an attack on poverty. Poverty basically is related to property and property relations and what is required is not mere moral exhortations for an attack on poverty but a direct attack on property and the existing property relations. In spite of its militaristic language inspired by recent conquest, the approach paper is just a paper tiger.

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JULY 8, 1972

One of the major functions of the Reserve Bank is to issue and regulate currency notes, quantity and quality-wise. The Bank has to check notes in circulation vis-a-vis the liabilities of its Issue Department so that the position is not imbalanced by unauthorised notes being in the market. Every piece of note received back from the market has to be examined. If found in good condition it is re-issued, otherwise, destroyed and replaced by fresh notes. This is the job of some 4,000 'Note-Examiners' at different centres of the RBI throughout India.

Destruction of notes without such examination is dangerous. Instances are not infrequent where blank papers were found in place of notes and packets were short by 10 or 15 pieces. If notes are destroyed after scrutiny and the relevant rules are followed, several thousand educated unemployed can be provided with jobs together with an additional one-third of that number in subordinate categories.

Although currency circulation rose to Rs 4079 crores in July 1970 from Rs 2098 crores in 1960-61 the number of staff in the Cash Department of the Reserve Bank has not increased proportionately. In Kanpur the number of employees in the Cash Department was 311 in 1962 and in 1970 only 307. In Calcutta the staff strength in the same category in November 1966 was 711 and in July 1970, 659.

The most important processes of job elimination practised in the RBI are 'Emergency Procedure' and 'Special Procedure'. The EP, in short, is a method to destroy bundles of notes quickly by pushing them into punching machines without counting or examination. But this was not found suitable by the RBI authorities; it meant a minimum percentage of checking and consumed a propor-

tion of manual labour, like punching of the packets, etc. So they have taken a very simple method of destroying the notes by throwing them into the furnace straightaway. A haven for forgers and defalcators! This is known as Special Procedure or SP. In the Calcutta centre alone the Bank thus killed 5,880 mandays' job in 1968-69 and in 1969-70 more than 7,000 in complete disregard of the employees' protest.

With the protest mounting the Bank instructed different scheduled banks, railways and government departments to sort out issuable and non-issuable notes before tendering the same with the Reserve Bank. These non-issuable notes are directly sent to the furnace, unexamined.

Recently there has been much difficulty about the coin-crisis in the market. The RBI blames hoarders and intermediary transactors of coins for malpractices. No doubt these men are there. But there is also the simple law of supply and demand. The main supply points of the coin market are the counters of the RBI and the Bank is in no mood to man the counters with sufficient strength so as to meet the rising demand.

Also, for years together the RBI placed indents of coins to be minted at a much lower level than the actual demand. Thus the coin-seekers have to buy coins from hoarders at a premium. Also, as the thickness of the plates used in the process of minting is not standardised, 95% of the coin bags supplied by the mints are irregular and tend towards excess content. This is another incentive to malpractice. And all this goes on in the name of scientific management. The sole indicator of success is less use of labour power.

The RBI management suspended two note-examiners at the Byculla (Bombay) office on June 16. As a result 3,500 employees went on indefinite

strike at Bombay supported by frequent short-term strike actions in other offices of the Bank in different parts of the country. The employees refuse to be a party to large-scale destruction of currency notes without

prior scrutiny as required by Rules and the Manual. Two more notable examination centres have now been opened and the suspension orders withdrawn. The strike has been called off. But the problem remains.

In A Bengali Ghetto In New York

SUJIT ROY

THE shrill voice of Banerjee virtually drowned the huckster on television. "We must have our own Saraswati Puja this time", he was shouting with a hamburger in his hand. "Enough", he said, "of the Chowdhurys who always control everything that Bengali society does in the city".

We were eight Bengalis huddled in a seedy apartment on the seventh floor in a rickety mansion off Broadway near Columbia. This time in New York was a bit humid, and moist air blew in through the crevices of the building. In Bengali cockney of the west bank of the Hooghly, Banerjee rattled on how mean were the Chowdhurys, how they controlled everything show the Bengalis put up in the city, how they compel organizers of every Bengali tamasha to let only their fat daughters sing Tagore. "Remember the last time", he pointed his spatulate fingers at the direction of the river, "it again had to be Chowdhury reading Tagore when we went out on a ride on the river". Never again, he said. "The silly scum of the Khardah refugee colony", Banerjee said, "has become the culture king here. Why, he is not worth even a paisa in Calcutta, let alone his culture". He paused and expected support.

All were temporary expatriates, except me. They have come on immigration visas to get away from their joblessness, absence of status in their neighbourhood, and underemployment. They were engineers, chartered accountants, pharmacists, and cow-doctors. Some had jobs, some none. Two of them were doing their business administration in the neigh-

bouring Columbia, squeezing foreign education between dishwashing in a black restaurant and coolie job at the waterfront. All came from the landless professional middle and lower middle class of Bengal. Stuffed with degrees that universities provided through mass copying and grace marks, they, however, could meet the "exacting" immigration requirements of the U.S. on borrowed money, deferred payment of airfare, and funds accrued upon their separation from jobs. And this was a meeting of kindred souls, scared of the cruel society outside their cubby holes and places of work. Many had been mugged, beaten up by roughs, discriminated against within a very short time of their arrival. It's not a new experience to them. This had often happened to them back home. Yet, the American experience of violence, so senseless at that, in this land of aliens had them completely shattered. This forced them to seek security in a group. The Bengalis clung together, the Gujaratis in their clubs. Even the Khalsas from Gurdaspur had what they called their association. There were the St. Stephen's clique, the B. E. College fraternity, the IITs, the Ahmedabad falcons, and even a Madurai Sangam.

Then spoke Lahiri. Bright lad with a large stomach, an alumni of B.E. College, he is luckier than other fellows for he found a job with a design firm within a very short time of his arrival. In his Rajshahi accent, Lahiri, young man of 26 years, launched a torrent of abuse against Banerjee. Lahiri argued that too many Saraswati pujas would only

make us look small to the other Indians. "They always deride us, call us dirty names, and find us quarrelsome". Lahiri went on, "Don't you think more pujas by Bengalis would only add fuel to their fire against us? It's really high time," he became pompous, and said, "we Bengalis stood together and showed them that we are one and indivisible." Besides, Lahiri thought this small clique could hardly raise that much money to fly out an image from Kumartuli to Manhattan. "Where's the cash"? he asked.

"Right", said another man. His face was not distinct in that interplay of light and shadow. He was wearing a khadi shirt and a pair of jeans, his sweater rolled as a pillow. The voice went on, "The Gujus have the money". Gujaratis were known as Gujus, and they abound in New York. Desais and Shahs from the enterprising west coast number more than five hundred in the endless volume of the New York telephone directory. "We got to rob a bank. There's no other way. Why, we eight here can't even raise enough cash for a scotch. And even if we could afford it by the grace of Ma Kali, none would ever chip in", the voice said. Sarkar whispered into my ear, "Biren is still out. It's been more than three months he got laid off". I asked if the voice went for welfare. "Hell, no", Sarkar explained, "he would then get thrown out".

Between bouts of chicken curry and rice, thoughts came wandering how much they ever get from the local scene, except widening their garish ties and wearing shirts made in Hong-kong and Taiwan, and their hair long with Israeli sideburns. They talked all the time about whatever happened at Saraswati puja last time, Tagore anniversaries and who sang or danced or read His poems, and the families living in the city. Spouses were dis-

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sected, and evaluated not on the count of their looks but how they cooked, and how hospitable they were to the sons of the Hooghly soil, and how many meals did they bum off the table of Bengali families. A man busy in New York, having no time at all for carrying on the tradition of Calcutta addas, was dismissed summarily as a snob, denationalized pro-Gora (that's how they call the whites), and mean.

How little, indeed, they have really taken from whatever was happening around them in New York. Not one had ever been to the New York Philharmonic, very few ever to the Lincoln Center. Asked if the play, the *Trial*, a tremendously moving drama by Father Daniel Berrigan, meant anything to them, a Hooghly mist descended on their face. Sarkar said they were too poor to afford it. But, the Pujas, of course, were a different proposition. The Chowdhurys who had made it in New York, could spend a thousand to retain their stranglehold on the Bengali cultural scene, but not ever bother about a five dollar concert. They shun the blacks, uninterested in ethnic minorities. The landscape and history of America do not raise even a flicker of interest. Their nearness to Montana or Grand Canyon from which they drew heavily at the Chowringhee based film houses in their callow youth, now didn't mean a thing. A phoney cultural pride became their refuge to rationalize their total indifference to sights and sounds of the country. The gossip is on the latest state of arrival of masala at the nearby Shah's shop. The ferment in the American society, the protest by the young people against the establishment did not move them, nor did the "lulled, dumb-found" city of New York near Hudson in the early hours of the morning. Hilsa talk made them nostalgic, and wetted their eyes.

Banerjee was picking up the piles of *New York Times* from the floor. We sat on them to eat. Sarkar and Roy moved toward the wash basin with the pots and pans. The curry

was good, smelling "foreign". The only thing missing was pan, and a "boudi". By then, the wind had fallen, and it was getting warm. Eight Bengalis looked at each other for comfort and assurance while the record player blared on the long playing gems from Tagore.

Book Review

The Yen'an Way

LONG before Mao and his comrades arrived in Shensi after their long and arduous trek from their South China bases, some of his compatriots were working there to draw the peasant masses into the revolutionary mainstream of contemporary China. Mao found in this desolate loess land not only a safer hideout against Kuomintang persecution but also an ideal place to try and develop his strategy of guerilla resistance and the mass line—the Yen'an way. Mark Selden in his book* tries to show how Chinese communists answered some of the puzzling questions of a peasant society in war against foreign oppression and white terror. In this attempt he was treading a difficult path strewn with names of such illustrious predecessors as Edgar Snow, Jerome Chen and Hinton. He is faithful in his analysis of the administrative, bureaucratic and political problems of the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsha border region, especially in Yen'an, its capital, and his narration is well documented. His defects are those of dry statistics and detail.

Like the rest of rural China north and north-west China too had acute tenancy problems and the problems of warlordism and harsh taxation. Niggardly nature, frequent drought, and famine in this desolate area continued to nag the peasantry and made the already skewed land distribution

even skewer. The Shensi socio-economic milieu had another dimension. It was the peasants' absolute fatalism and, as its inevitable antithesis, their pent-up bitterness once they were organised (a constant source of peasant excesses in the later days of the land redistribution campaign).

Remoteness from the hubs of intellectual and political activity and inaccessibility made both the Kuomintang and the Communist leadership indifferent to the objective situation in the northern border region in the early years of the revolutionary movement. These were the days of the First United Front and of Borodin and the Comintern. The CCP leadership then was enmeshed in intellectualism and dogmatism and the question of rural disintegration and the revolution was at a discount. The proponents of agrarian revolution were then in a minority.

In Shensi itself communist activities were centred around a small group of students and intellectuals, away from the workers and peasants. The Kuomintang's Northern Expedition, however, changed the communist outlook completely. Under the leadership of Feng the communists spread into the North China country and became for the first time aware of the peasants' sufferings and the explosive situation there.

But the peasants had not always remained content with their lot and the urban indifference. Time and again they had fought pitched battles against landlords' gendarmes, sometimes with the help of local communist leaders. The ranks of these early guerillas were swelled heavily by the services of the local bandits, village loafers and other floating elements, not al-

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*The Yen'an Way in Revolutionary China

By Mark Selden

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ways with good effect, though in fact, throughout their struggle the Chinese communist leadership, knowing the revolutionary potentialities of these freebooters, looked for devices to assimilate them in their revolutionary framework. Kao Kang's career in Shensi provides a microcosm of this struggle. Originally the leader of a floating labour group, Kao Kang was driven out of the party. But he fought his way back into it and subsequently became a respectable member of the border region along with Mao.

In late 1933 and early 1934 the communist influence spread rapidly and the total party membership during the period stood at 3,000. Even two massive annihilation campaigns—the first and second in Kuomintang chronology—could do little harm to them. As a token of their increased strength the Northern Revolutionary Committee was set up and it was decided to expand the Shensi-Kansu border region further with a rudimentary Soviet political structure.

Two things contributed to this communist growth. First, the abandonment of the Wei valley and the transfer of partisan activities to Northern Shensi and the Shensi-Kansu Border region which was more suitable. Second, the communist success in building up base areas. This concept of base area occupies the central theme of the CPC strategy throughout this and subsequent decades (Selden says that the Shensi leadership had already conceptualised the base area when Mao arrived there with his army. A greater probability, however, is that Mao was aware of it and was actually

fighting for this political line as a minority leader in the Central Committee.) The Shensi partisans first established their bases in inaccessible mountains to avoid Kuomintang military threat. And then they carried out land revolution to mobilise the peasant masses which, in turn, supported the military component. A minimum threshold of security from the feudal landlord challenge is needed to redistribute land and without land distribution a base area cannot be created. This is the key to the peasant problem.

By 1934 land distribution was completed in most of the border region. This radically changed the class pattern of the village society. The landlord class was completely eliminated. With their land confiscated, they either fled the country or were killed. The rich peasants went down in number as did the percentage of the poor peasants and the landless, though they still continued to occupy an important position. But the middle ranks swelled unusually. The political impact of this violent revolution was immense. It unleashed great mass enthusiasm and the communists considerably increased their influence and number.

But the Marco Polo bridge incident and the large-scale Japanese invasion completely changed the situation. The CPC called for the subordination of class interest to the nationwide anti-Japanese united front against the invasion. Mao pleaded for better treatment to be meted to the rich peasants. Landlords and other village elites were allowed to return to their home and many of them were reinstated. But the peasant masses did not respond to the nationalist appeal. This posed a problem to the Chinese communist leadership. On the one hand they were to carry on land reform and rouse the peasants and on the other ensure the support of the bourgeoisie for the Second United Front. Mao's answer was New Democracy. Bureaucracy and adminis-

tration was toned up to meet the wartime needs and peasant participation was ensured by popular elections under party surveillance.

The communists made remarkable gains in the anti-Japanese united front. But this success itself drew Chiang Kai-Shek's wrath and his army swooped down on the communist bases in central and south China and laid a siege of the border region. The communists were hard pressed, economically and militarily. To overcome the crisis Mao launched the 'chen feng' movement. Its essence was reaffirmation of the class struggle which had been subordinated to the united front movement.

Two trends always dominated the Chinese communist movement: one was the elitist-centrist trend and the other the populist trend. During chen feng the latter was revived. Out of the stresses and strains, suffering and struggle of the rectification and production movements of 1942, there emerged in China a concept of communist man and society and a new relationship between leaders and the people. On this Mao said, "the two methods which we communists should employ in carrying any tasks are, first, the linking of the leadership with the masses... In all practical work of our party, correct leadership can only be developed on the principle of 'from the masses to the masses'."

This is Mao's concept of mass line which he perfected in Yenan. This is the Yenan way of the Chinese revolution. It was the precursor of the Hundred Flowers Movement of the fifties and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of the sixties.

H.D.

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সন্ধিক্ষণ

রাজনীতি-অর্থনীতি সামাজিক বিষয়ক

পাক্ষিক পত্রিকা

ষ্টলে খোঁজ নিন

The Show Goes On

BY A CORRESPONDENT

THE date was July 1. Time, evening. A big crowd made a beeline in front of Calcutta's Rabindra Sadan, the State-owned well-equipped theatre, to see the People's Little Theatre's *Tiner Talwar*. Directed by Utpal Dutt and written by him on the occasion of the centenary of the Bengali stage, the play has been drawing capacity crowds since June 1971. Seventy shows have been held so far and theatre-lovers were looking forward to its hundred days, maybe many more than hundred days because there has never been any lack of patronage for this kind of theatre in Bengal. And in fact it is the best produced Bengali play in several years.

But on July 1 the long row spilled over the foyer because an unusually large crowd had gathered. It was unexpected. Only last week it was known that many more shows were planned. At least another 20 shows were on schedule. But just two days before the July 1 show a cryptic announcement appeared in the newspapers that it was the last show at the Sadan. Why! Was the PLT going out of town to perform elsewhere? For only some time back it had been to Delhi where it earned plaudits and also a small grant from the Sangeet Natak Akademy in appreciation of the performance.

But things were different. Those who read the ad in *Ananda Bazar Patrika* could not guess why the schedule was changed suddenly, for

the paper deleted that part of the ad itself which referred to the reason—that the Rabindra Sadan authorities would not permit further holding of any show of *Tiner Talwar*, in fact any show by PLT, in the auditorium.

If this is so, some questions remain unanswered. Who on earth are the blessed souls who decided the fate of the play and the troupe? Is not the Sadan the property of the people since it was built with their money? Did not the Chief Minister himself see the play only the other day? Did he not say at the same premises some weeks back that the Bengali stage was second to none and that it would be his endeavour to remove the obstacles from its path of development? Didn't he express shame that men of the theatre had to approach people not remotely connected with theatre or concerned with culture for its sustenance?

The whole episode has to be seen in its proper perspective. It cannot be an isolated phenomenon. The Establishment is well armed to come down with a heavy hand on creative endeavour. Even though pre-censorship in terms of the 1876 Act was repealed by the UF Government, other means are there. Termination notices can be served without assigning any reason.

What is the burden of the production? It is an indictment of British imperialism but that is only incidental. It relates to the formative days of the Bengal theatre. What could there be which caused such fright? A remarkable parallel is in the play itself in which the British officer threatens to ban seditious activity of the play *Titumir* following such action against *Gajadananda* which caricatured a native who had feted the visiting Prince of Wales. After a quarter of a century of formal hand-over of political power to brown sahibs venting of anger against British imperialism is made synonymous with an outburst against the Establishment!

The fact of the matter as revealed on enquiry leads to dismaying thoughts. The Rabindra Sadan Committee is packed with members chosen by the ruling clique and not long ago three former members were unceremoniously dropped to make room for others. There was a public outcry but theatre lovers and people interested in culture failed to forge unity to undo the outrageous conduct of the authorities.

Members of the Committee like Sombhu Mitra, Suchitra Mitra, Subhas Mukherjee and Amala Shankar who were not present at the particular meeting should clarify their stand.

This is censorship by the back-door. In this year of centenary of the Bengali stage the present rulers have equalled the record of the British in muzzling the theatre. Given their firm adherence to democratic values they will certainly better their performance before long!

The show however goes on elsewhere but the long arm can reach out anywhere now. This is only one part of the story. The history of the Bengali stage is replete with

instances of oppression. But the present perpetrators of persecution have not read history. The British with their might and ingenuity met with little success. They set off a chain reaction which enabled people to withstand onslaughts. The draconian measures of the Establishment, aided by its henchmen in the bourgeois press would surely unleash forces strong enough to counter fascist philistinism.

will surge with pride that the familiar old party, just around our street corners, should prove to be the nucleus of World Socialism. Not Peking, not Moscow, but Calcutta—specifically Alimuddin Street—shall lead the world. Oh Calcutta!

People who see no logical consistency in Radical Front, non-Congress Front, One Party 'mass' Front, More Party Left Front, All Party non-Congress Front—all these postures of the Party—are fools. Such contradictions are in the eyes of the observer. Charges that voices of dissent within the Party are immediately dubbed 'sectarian' and firmly silenced, are motivated allegations. Obviously only reactionaries would indulge in nonsensical talk of the dominance of petit-bourgeois elements within the party, and descriptions of the Party as being one of primary school teachers, clerks, careerist collegians and 'spontaneous' trade union leaders of 'local' calibre.

India is the Land of Faith. Reason is an ugly 'Imported' aberration.

R. R.
Calcutta

Letters

Tiner Talwar

The People's Little Theatre's play *Tiner Talwar* has been running for a year and was being presented at Rabindra Sadan on an average of three or four times a month. But on June 26 we were handed a letter signed by the Chief Administrative Officer. The letter declares that the P.L.T. would never again be allowed inside the Sadan and all dates booked by us for this year have been cancelled. The letter gives no reason for this outrageous step, and the Administrative Officer, on being asked, attributed it to a decision by the Executive Committee.

Worse still, on June 29 and 30 and on July 1, during the P.L.T.'s last three shows, the Rabindra Sadan was swarming with armed policemen, in uniform and in plain clothes, who prowled even before the dressing-rooms. Once more the Administrative Officer blamed the Executive Committee for this intrusion. We should like to ask the Sadan authorities, how can you invite armed policemen into a theatre that bears Tagore's name? We hear that people like Probodh Sanyal, Pramatha Bishi, Amitabha Choudhury, Santosh Ghosh and Soumyen Tagore are members of the Sadan Committee. We did not think they would permit this kind of vandalism. It is now up to the people to decide whether men who try to

intimidate artistes with the help of policemen can be allowed to run a theatre built with public money.

The people must also want to know exactly what their objection is to our play *Tiner Talwar* which has been uniformly praised by the press and serious theatre-goers all over the country. Why should the Sadan authorities be so vindictive, if *Tiner Talwar* attacks British imperialism? Why should they be terrified if the play presents the patriotic struggles of the Bengali theatre?

The treatment of the P.L.T. is not unexpected. They have already blacklisted and thrown out two groups—the Ranga Sabha and the Suresh Sangstad. They have forced out several important members from the Committee. The press has reported much corruption and irregularity in the management of the theatre. The question now is: how long will the people tolerate this state of affairs?

UTPAL DUTT
Chief Director
PLT, Calcutta

Voice From Madurai

From Madurai the oracle has spoken. The leaders represent the veritable quintessence of Marxism-Leninism. The blood of the workers

Aligarh

Apropos "Aligarh: a rigged crisis" in (June 17, 1972), to talk of the Central Government's "Fetish of secularism" is to give undue credit to the party in power. If at all it suffers from any sort of fetishism it is the fetish of opportunism. But surely there is a group in this country which has made a fetish of catholicity. (Like a section of over-zealous Marxists and utopian sarvodayawalas). Your "correspondent" perhaps belongs to that species. Like the government's concern for secularism this catholicism seems to be 'over demonstrative.'

The government's decision to introduce some reforms in the constitution of the Aligarh University might be hasty and premature. It is one thing (though childish) to argue that the government should not have taken such a hasty decision because

it led to curfew and dislocation of daily life and another to argue that the government should have waited for a few more years simply because "the minority community (is) fearful of losing its cultural (or communal?) rights and prerogatives." To advise the government not to 'hustle' the Muslims, because they are a bit chary of giving up their traditional (i.e. communal) loyalties, is certainly preaching catholicity with a vengeance. For, in that case one must not hustle the majority community which is equally 'chary' of giving up its communal rights and prerogatives! all boil down to saying—let the status quo last forever.

From our past experience we know that preaching this sort of catholicity and making a cause out of every unjust demand of the minority community has not only encouraged its fanatics but also pushed many neutral Hindus on to the bandwagon of the Hindu communal parties, thus making the communal commitments of the bigots on both sides total.

Let us not encourage that trend any more. It is time we called a spade a spade and fought communalism of the minority group as ruthlessly as that of the majority group, for reaction of any brand is reaction after all and must be dealt with as such.

RABINDRANATH SAHOO
Cuttack

Blue Print !

The day you become 'consistent' in the way the Marxist-Leninists of Bombay (Letters, July 1) appear to desire I am sure your 'Left Circles' or readership would dwindle to a zero. I would advise these charmed devotees of the Cult of the Revolution—that is the most apt description—to be content with the 'Party' Press and pamphlets. I read and esteem the journal for the very 'inconsistencies' your Bombay MLs are scandalised at.

I shall not attempt to trade 'Dialectics' on the issues raised. Accept-

ing those terms of reference would itself amount to a defeat.

I wonder whether any secular consistency can be discerned in the array of actions and postures of China or Russia, for that matter. There is no blueprint for revolution. One may recall how Stalin and the Comintern were never 'dialectically' happy with the CPC and Mao Tse-tung. What 'Laws of Revolution' can explain the specific factors that saw a tide of revolution in the immediate postwar period and the stagnation that ensued? Whether a revolution stemming from the intellectual inspirations of doctrinaire spinners of dialectical logic is possible or not has been amply demonstrated in this very geopolitical area in the recent past.

Undeniably, Marxism gives one an insight into reality—economic and political. No further. There are no 'Laws'. There are needs and tasks. Methods are to be evolved. Doctrines and dogma are unnecessary, even undesirable. I will not move one step with people so casual about human lives. I call them a variety of 'kapaliks'—understandable perhaps in this Land of Faith. Also, because of the fact that no revolution can be accomplished without human passions. I most sincerely feel that the heartless ones are the first enemies of humanity.

T. R. RAMALINGAM
Calcutta

Terror In Santipur

The terror started by the Congress with the help of anti-social elements, the police and the administration has now taken an ominous form in the Santipur area, Krishnagar district. Gangs calling themselves "Anti-Naxal Squads" have mushroomed. Behind them are vested interests and anti-social elements who have changed their loyalties with the change in the political situation. As before, they are being encouraged by the police, administration and the ruling party. These

squads are collecting arms and making a show of force. On May 2 they even paraded the streets with arms. They are now raiding villages, riding on trucks, arresting and beating up people, collecting funds. Those who are not willing to help them are being harassed, sometimes with the help of the police. Rural functions, land disputes, personal feuds are all being exploited. There have been cases of arson and looting. You see masked men when these squads demonstrate or go into action. In their posters—illegal because they carry no print line, they boast of killing 'Naxalite dogs'.

The people of Santipur thana are panic-stricken and demoralised. But they have to get over the feeling of helplessness and act. They have to rise against the terrorism of the exploiters.

P. K.
Santipur

A Tale Of Two States

The governments of both Bangladesh and West Bengal are very sincere in their attempt to maintain law and order at any cost. The jails in West Bengal have an accommodation for 19,000 but the arrests so far made number about 24,000. As such the Government has decided to build two more jails, at Durgapur and Berhampur, the latter for the Naxalites.

The Prime Minister of Bangladesh, being disgusted with the activities of extremists and some other politicals has declared that he will make the entire Ramna Maidan a jail as all the jails in Bangladesh are already full.

Perhaps in each development plan there should be some provision for more jails so that the 51 lakhs of unemployed youth can have suitable accommodation? Is not the arrest of such a large number of people and detention without trial undemocratic and against the rule of law? The growing unemployment and naked economic disparity have made the younger section hopeless and restless. They cannot be blamed for the failure

of the government but they are butchered, tortured and detained indefinitely, all in the name of and furtherance of democracy.

S. CHATTERJEE
Calcutta

Literature Of Protest

Now a days, the bourgeois press is talking much about the literature of protest. There is no doubt that protest has always been an essential feature of literature, but only sharpening of the class contradictions draws a clear line between genuine and pseudo-protest. Rich tributes are being paid to the guerilla poets of African and Latin American countries and even of Bangladesh. The National Writers Camp (New Delhi March 28, 1972) praised the spirit of resistance and magnificence of Neruda's poetry. Lotus prizes have been conferred on foreign poets who are writing in the face of guns. A 'well-known' Indian poet in English also paid homage to the Guatemalan guerilla poet, Otto Rene Castillo, who was captured and burnt alive. NRC also condemned the merciless attack and brutal torture of anti-establishment poets and writers throughout the world. Papers were presented about the writer's commitments to social justice and his

concern with social reality. Though they talked about India's 'brilliant young men' led astray by the false prophets of revolution; not a word was said about the Indian poets and writers killed in open conflict with the establishment or languishing in prisons without justice. This exposes the hypocrisy and humbug of Indian writers who are always ready to sell themselves at any cost for meagre government prizes.

The loyalty of the Indian press to the ruling class cannot be questioned. When the Indian Government cracked down on the rebel poets and writers of Andhra (Sri Sri, Jwala Mukhi, M. T. Khan and others), U.P. (Kanchan Kumar, Ram Dhani), Bihar (Alok Dhanva, Vanu Gopal), Delhi (Hans Raj Rehbar), Bombay (Jagdhambha Parshad Dikshit), and Panjab, it kept complete silence. The valour with which Andhra's revolutionary poet, Soba Rao Panigrahi, fought the forces of oppression in the jungles of Srikakulam will go down in history.

In 1970, a new wave emerged marking the end of lifeless and impotent poetry in Punjabi literature. There militant writers have been mercilessly tortured and thrown into prison cells. Many budding young Punjabi poets have been shot dead in

"encounters", many charged with murder and rewards have been announced for their heads. The Punjabi monthly *Hem Joyati* has been proscribed and its editor Surinder put behind bars under the internal security act. He has been waiting for trial for the last six months. The remaining one or two Punjabi magazines are also being intimidated and their contributors terrorised. But these young men will never truckle to bullies. Young Punjabi poets Lal Singh Dil, Darshan Khatkar, Amarjeet Chandan (edited two clandestine papers), Harbhajan Halvarvi, Pash and Gurdeep Grewal, have faced the onslaught with exemplary courage. They are the harbingers of new portents in Punjabi literature.

In a social system based on exploitation, prizes are conferred on those who uphold the status quo and not on those who oppose it. Of course rebels are also rewarded, but with bullets. Fraudulent Indian pre-establishment writers of shoddy intellectuality should know that a genuine literature of protest is being written in India in the face of guns, behind prison bars and in interrogation centres. It makes no difference whether they accept it or not.

YUGJEET
Chandigarh

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