

frontier

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IN A NEW COFFIN ?

IT was in the fitness of things that, in this centenary year of the Bengali public theatre, the Indian National Congress staged its annual plenum in Calcutta. By all accounts it was a grand success—having something for everybody irrespective of friends and foes. True, as a drama it lacked suspense and tensions; there was no breathtaking resolution, no sudden reversal of policy, no startlingly new suggestion. But the Bengali theatre-lovers have developed a sophisticated taste, and a switch-over from traditional drama to episodic (do they call it Brechtian!) was no major obstacle to their enjoying it. Moreover, there was a sort of epic quality in this Bidhan Nagar drama: Everybody knew what it would tell. What was not known was how it would be told. Now that the drama is over, one can say, with some satisfaction that the presentation had something novel. The radicals in the Congress were rather uncharitable when they described the plenum as an old corpse in a new coffin. It was not. The players had shown a very keen awareness of the criticisms levelled against them. This was something of a new development. When the Congress President said that the session would take no more resolutions but would devise means to implement the old ones, it showed that the Congresswallahs had at last gained some common sense. When a Young Turk referred to the bogus elections and bogus membership which had made the Congress a bogus organisation or when Mrs Gandhi talked of class distinctions and social inequalities, it was definitely something of a new track. Not that such sentiments were unheard in Congress sessions earlier: what was remarkable was that nearly everybody, not excluding Mr Jagjivan Ram, was speaking in the 'socialist' language. Mrs Gandhi has truly educated her comrades, a thing which her predecessors had failed to do.

We are aware of those critics who were aghast at the absurdity of the whole affair. That a party wedded to the slogan 'Garibi Hatao' should spend nearly forty lakh rupees (officially) on fun and frolic, that after or before sumptuous meals speakers should talk of drought to an empty pandal, that the Government would go in a brazen fashion to take part in a party meeting (rasogollas in a police car for the delegates) and a host of other such little incompatibles have distressed such critics. It surely speaks much of their credulousness that they expected something

else. The Congress has something of the Hindu religion, the ability to absorb all sorts of absurdities and contradictions with a rich sense of the comic. Who else could have forbidden the members from taking part in regional and parochial movements right after manoeuvring the Assam and Andhra imbroglios.

After this March Towards Socialism session of the Congress, we are afraid that some people might be worrying with the credentials of Mrs Gandhi and her fairies. Is she going communist? What is this talk of classless society? What the hell does she mean by socialism through non-violence? When somebody, even if she be Mrs Gandhi, admits of the existence of class distinctions, isn't she, even if by preaching, a communist? No fear. Admission of class distinctions is not the same thing as that of class struggle. One does not become communist by recognising that there are social inequalities or class distinctions; one becomes a communist when one believes in the inevitability and need of class struggle. It is true that many in the Congress showed their awareness of the hollowness of Congress policies. Many barked against the monopoly business, the monopoly press, the opportunist bureaucracy. Many admitted that the socialist slogans aired three years ago had been in the air only. Nothing had been done regarding land reforms, urban property ceiling or the employment situation. But mere awareness does not lead one to act towards remedying the defective—that was the Hegelian fallacy. But there are many who would be duped by the fallacy—certainly in our country there are millions who believe that socialism can be attained through Congress plenums.

Enemy Within

Israel has reacted in its characteristic manner to the latest UN General Assembly resolution on occupied territories. The resolution asked

Israel to "declare publicly its adherence to the principle of non-annexation of territories through the use of force," and to "desist from all policies and practices affecting the physical character or demographic composition of the occupied Arab territories." But one does not expect it to make any such declaration when it is going ahead with Jewish settlements in the occupied areas of the West Bank, Sinai, Gaza and the Golan Heights. There may not be one opinion in the Golda Meir Cabinet about how much Arab lands to retain, but it is united in the view that Israel must keep those areas necessary to maintain its "future security". This implies that the Arab refugees of 1967 cannot look forward to a peace settlement which will enable them to return to their old lands. The Arabs living in Israel are having a nightmarish existence; they have been fenced off from the outside world and they are subjected to a harrowing security check. Still there are many brave Arabs to harass the Israelis; in spite of a strict censorship, reports of bomb blasts in busy market places and blowing up of military trucks appear in the Press. One major worry of the Meir Cabinet is that too many Arabs will pose an impossible security task. Different Zionist leaders have come up with different maps showing the areas that must be retained for a "secure Israel"; but there is still no agreement about how much Arab land with how few Arabs is most secure.

Meanwhile, the Jewish settlement has created a lot of new problems for the King of Jordan. Although Hussein is considered most acceptable among all Arab leaders, the Israelis by this particular move has made it almost impossible for the Hashemite monarch to sell a peace settlement among his countrymen. Hussein finds himself in a very uncomfortable situation; he is already hated by the Arabs for his planned extermination of the commandos; now the Israeli settlement has undermined his credibility still further.

A few words need to be said about the changed voting pattern in the General Assembly. Some changes had to be made in the original resolution to enable America to abstain from voting. This may not in itself be a radical development, but no country likes the idea of supporting publicly the annexation of others' territories. Israel has never paid any heed to the proceedings of the world organisation, but it is now scared about the activities of some young Jews within the country. Recently four Jews were rounded up on charges of spying for Syria. Two of them reportedly admitted that they had divulged military information to Damascus. They are committed to world revolution and destruction of the Zionist State. But for the time being the movement has suffered a setback as the Israeli secret service managed to arrest some of its leading lights on the basis of information supplied by the infiltrators.

Trends In Laos

The savage war in Vietnam has obscured the bloodletting in Laos which has a close relation with events in Vietnam. Like Vietnam, here too the warring parties have engaged in talks on peace which, despite occasional rosiness, has remained elusive. In November when the communists proposed their five-point peace proposal, prospects of peace looked up. But Vientiane stood in its way. To the Pathet Lao it counter-offered five points which reflected the irreconcilable nature of the two, though the Government later withdrew certain points. Premier Souvanna Phouma and his men want to wrest from their adversaries military advantages through this politics of peace. But they met with appropriate resistance from the Pathet Lao. Vientiane has always attributed the Pathet Lao's military success to the North Vietnamese and has countered

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Octopus On The Himalayas

R. P. MULLICK

the communist demand for unconditional withdrawal of the Americans by asking for the removal of the North Vietnamese ghost. On the question of a council of coalition also the official Laotian stand differs from the Pathet Lao's though some have found in their latest offer of an enlarged National Assembly a concession which may ensure the security that the Reds are seeking in peace.

But the gap remained ever wide on the question of a cease-fire line. Vientiane insists on the 1961 peace line which the Pathet Lao disown. The communists have gained immensely since then and are now stronger than ever. Four-fifths of Laos and three million Laotians are under their control, including the Plain of Jars. Vang Pao's private army has failed to dislodge the Pathet Lao, despite the U.S. B52s. North of Vientiane the Government forces have gained marginally, but the area around Sala Phon Khoum and Vang Vieng are bristling with the Pathet Lao operatives. In the South too, the communists control Saravane and Plateau.

The question of Laotian peace is intimately related with the cobweb of an Indochina cease-fire. Though the Americans are not physically present in the Vientiane peace talks, they have the controlling string. From their Udorn bases in Thailand U.S. planes have bombed Laotian territory. General Vang Pao's mercenaries have fought the red army under the direct training and funding of the Americans, and they have decisive control over the Government budget and Lao's economy. For the Americans, the imposition of their peace terms on the Vietnamese can be aborted if the communists can keep control over their logistic line through Laos and Cambodia. Small wonder, therefore, the U.S. has made every effort to influence the Vientiane peace talks, their occasional denial notwithstanding and its ebbs and flows largely correspond to the situation in the Paris peace negotiations.

THE stillness and cosy seclusion of the Himalayas was broken about fourteen years ago when the engineered revolt of the Khampas in Tibet ended in a fiasco, and the young, immature Dalai Lama fled to India with an immense hoard of treasures and entourage, presuming to have formed an emigre Government on Indian soil. Immediately after his entry he was granted the status of a State guest by Mr Nehru plus all the facilities, accommodation (on the topmost and best Gun-hill estate, Mussouree), indirect financial help and links with the world Press. India had agreed to give up extra-territorial rights in Tibet, which it had inherited from the British imperialist Government in India, to withdraw its army detachments from "some places", and also hand over postal and telegraph services and similar units of establishment to the local authorities after the Chinese army entered Tibet. It is therefore, significant, that Mr Nehru himself should have held it not only discreet but desirable that "our officers made arrangements for the distribution of a translation of the statement (of the Dalai Lama) to newspaper correspondents", but also that when the Dalai Lama and his party reached Mussouree, the Government should have made arrangements for their stay, and that, "I have had occasion to visit Mussouree since then and have had a long talk with the Dalai Lama." (Statement on April 27, 1959.) Rules of international relationship and diplomatic protocol being what they are, this indirect State recognition to the Dalai Lama and to the nucleus of a future "Tibetan Government" accompanying him was the unannounced preparation for a contingency which the Government of India visualised in 1959, and envisages still, of setting up an advanced base in Tibet through the agency of the Lama's emigre Govern-

ment. Surprisingly, Nehru as Prime Minister did resort to diplomatic double-talk by adverting to the agreement by which India had recognized, a few years earlier, Tibet as an integral part of China. This was much more than, and contradistinct from, mere Chinese suzerainty that the British Government in India had recognised as a political article of expediency. ("I have no doubt in my mind that the agreement we made with China with regard to Tibet was a right agreement. It was a correct agreement and we shall stand by it". Statement in the Lok Sabha, May 8, 1959.)

It was a curious mixture of an awareness that, "the countries with whom Tibet has been most intimately connected in the past have been Mongolia and China", with a desire to pressurise China into a situation when it would be feasible for the Dalai Lama "to accept these assurances (of Premier Chou En-lai apropos respecting the autonomy of Tibet) in good faith and co-operate in maintaining that autonomy...". The purpose of the ruling class, as reflected by Mr Nehru at a watershed in the history of Sino-Indian relations, was to keep up as a potentially live issue the question of Tibetan autonomy. India's intention was that the world public should be brought to appreciate the former's point of view apropos the denial, subtly alleged, of autonomy to the Tibetan people. This traditional trend of India's South Block to introduce the thin end of a power-political wedge into the strategically important trans-Himalayan region, the delicate underbelly of China, still continues.

Bhutan

The sudden, and a more than chancey, death of King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk of Bhutan last year may see further tightening of the grip on this little sub-Himalayan kingdom.

The late King, whom the pro-establishment Press in India has now been allowed to praise as one who had introduced the element of constitutionalism in Bhutanese monarchy and of democracy in the 150-member National Assembly, the Council of Ministers and the Royal Advisory Council, was looked upon with a scarcely concealed scowl in New Delhi and by its political representative in Thimpu some seven years ago. The series of mysterious palace intrigues which then took place was highlighted by the murder of the then Prime Minister of Bhutan and an attempt on the king himself. There was systematic heightening of inter-dynastic feud between the Prime Minister's family and the king's, climaxed by the flight of the previous Commander-in-Chief of the Bhutanese army to Nepal, from where he charged India with complicity in the conspiracy against the king during the critical 1964-65 period of India's quietly aggressive diplomacy. All these show that India's rulers had by then given up the so-called weak and vacillating foreign policy of the fifties and gone in for a vigorous application of a neo-imperialist protector's role in Bhutan as well as in Sikkim. India's representative in Gangtok, then Mr Avtar Singh, came into limelight at the time with his mysterious movements and the role of a successor-imperialist Resident. He might not have been involved in the intrigues, but India's tactics of keeping Bhutan under surveillance has become obvious in the continued chaperoning of the ruler of this small country. No voice is allowed to be articulate there about revising the "treaty" of August 8, 1959, on the strength of which Bhutan was obliged to sign away her freedom and initiative in external affairs, which are to be "guided at the advice of India". The new Bhutanese king, fortunately a mere adolescent, at a Press conference gave ample indication of being under India's powerful influence. Bhutan must not accept aid from any foreign country other than India, not even from in-

ternational agencies except on a bilateral basis under the blessed Colombo Plan (which is not heard of any more even in Colombo itself). Bhutan, though a member of the UN, cannot exercise its external sovereignty in normalising relations with its northern neighbour, China, which must await some unforeseen "appropriate time", i.e. when the green signal is given by New Delhi. Bhutan cannot, also, unseal the sealed Bhutan-Tibet border to resume the traditional trade. All that this little country is permitted now is to accept India's annual subsidy of Rs 5 lakhs which will increase to phenomenal dimensions. During the first five-year plan (1961-66), Bhutan spent Rs 10.5 crores out of the total outlay of 17 crores. The second plan outlay rose to Rs 20 crores. And the third? Out of the Rs 35-crore expenditure being planned, India is to foot the bill for Rs 33 crores. This is the price of maintaining a neo-imperialist stranglehold over Bhutan, 18,000 square miles in size, with nearly 800,000 people (a quarter of which are Nepalese), and whose constitutional monarchy has got to share political power with the country's monastic order controlling more than 3000 State-financed monasteries, staffed by about 6,000 lamas. The indirect system of electing 110 out of the 150 members of the Bhutanese Parliament has brought into force only the village headmen. The bulk of the peasantry continue in grinding poverty, mostly landless or owning too little to rise above the subsistence level. Yet, the timber and a few handicraft industries are all that Bhutan and her development aid-experts (400 of them and 1000 administrative aides, all Indian) can show to the tourists whose itinerary is completely guided and fed by sources of information and propaganda which New Delhi allows Thimpu to provide.

Sikkim

Compared to Bhutan, the status of Sikkim has always been that of a directly controlled protectorate, al-

though not recognised as one of the units in the schedules stipulated in the Constitution. Among the top echelons of the administration, especially in the army hierarchy, there is a facile notion that Sikkim is just a part of India, one of the Centrally ruled States. The Border Roads Organisation was created by the Central Government about the early sixties; as the Defence Department's system of security and communication along the entire northern frontier of India, the target of which was China, it has ever taken Sikkim for granted. But the Foreign Affairs Department has been subtle enough to spread the illusion that Sikkim is not a protectorate but is a quasi-independent State whose internal autonomy has to be "guaranteed" by India's armed forces—as the 'treaty' of 1950 appears to convey. It is forgotten, however, that there is a strong current of resentment among a section of Sikkim's (200,000 approximately) populace against this treaty because it is between two unequal partners. The impression that the British imperialist tradition is being continued by India under a different nomenclature, persists. For a time, the elite among India's government bureaucracy kept up the line that such resentment was confined to Sikkim's sophisticated intelligentsia, a small coterie of its ambitious bureaucracy. It was also suggested that the Chogyal too was ambitious and that the clamour for revision of the 1950 treaty rose from his jealousy of the status of Bhutan. It is said that the noisy agitationists on Gangtok's streets do not know what they are talking about when they demand independence and establish-

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ment of people's will over the monarch's. Even the moderately toned demand of Kazi Lendhup's pro-Indian National Congress does not find a favourable response from New Delhi and the ruling class interests, since the latter are more interested now in helping the "ambitious" Chogyal retain his despotic hold. They also are keen on taking Sikkim's income from cardamom production and the excise duty on its imports. From 1950 onwards this little protectorate has been getting a tentative annual grant of Rs 7 lakhs, as an alternative to excise revenue. But New Delhi is cunning enough to hold the Sikkimese people in leash with the illusions of Plan subsidy and a seeming generosity in building roads—the much-vaunted infrastructure of the economy—which, in fact, are the continuing fulfilment of India's "Security" requirements. So, when India's "munificence" towards Sikkim's fourth plan is announced with a fanfare about the Rs 85-lakh outlay on agricultural development, the other fact that it is being fleeced and cheated of crores of rupees of revenue over the last two decades and a little more is forgotten. But the Sikkimese people, especially the more emotionally articulate Nepalese-speaking section and the progressives among the well-trained administrative personnel, do not forget the facts of the unequal and inequitable Indo-Sikkimese relationship.

Nepal

Since the accession to the throne of young King Birendra, about whose pro-left antecedents and mental outlook there is some factual evidence, the elements of the upper feudal bourgeoisie have been active again to

revive the pre-1960 phase of parliamentary party rule in Nepal. They have support from their Indian counterparts across the border, whose interest in manipulating such revival of "democracy" is understandable since this process can be well guided by vested interests from New Delhi. The Nehruan tradition and attitude of superciliousness towards Nepal still continues as a rule: "geographically Nepal is almost a part of India although she is an independent country". (March 17, 1950), and, "So far as Nepal is concerned it is a well-known fact—and it is contained in our treaties and other engagements—that we have a special position in Nepal" (November 13, 1954).

The post-1960 reaction of shock over the establishment of a new constitution abolishing parliamentary party rule in Nepal by King Mohendra still happens to be a determining factor in India's Nepal policy. For quite a number of years, self-styled leaders of the Nepalese upper class played at creating a government in exile, and under the patronage of the black-money vested interests in India as also of the bureaucracy, have kept up a challenge to the continuing stability of Nepalese policy. Of late, these elements appear to have got fresh inputs of moral and material help, and have tried to ride on a wave of youth unrest within Nepal—which however stems from quite different factors—by provoking clashes and organising hit-and-run forays from across the border (e.g. the raid by about a hundred well-armed people on Haripur village on the midnight of August). There have also been remarkable shiftings of the allegiance on the part of some well-known figures of the previous panchayat-governments that had held power during King Mohendra's times. Topping these events, a campaign is being slowly mounted to pressurize young King Birendra to forsake the supposedly pro-Chinese politicians from positions of authority. The new strategy aims at disheveling the upper and middle strata of Nepal's administrative set-up through

sly inroads into Nepalese bureaucracy and by playing on the local bourgeoisie's traditional concern for stability and security. How far such interventionist strategy, and its clever tactical methods of telescoping Nepalese bourgeois interests on the political and economic urges and aspirations of the toilers, the youth, and the intelligentsia will prevail is difficult to foresee.

From early September to mid-October 1972 a change in the strategic thinking of Nepal's present leadership has become discernible. Mr Radha Prasad Ghimere, a new entrant into Nepal's National Panchayat, may become a portent for more profound and urgently needed socio-economic changes. Mr Ghimere is a member of the politbureau of the outlawed Communist Party in Nepal that has followed a revolutionary path. The party's organ is the weekly *Jan-Jagriti*. With political courage, which the young Birendra is credited with, he can still transform Nepal's impending crisis into a leap forward, a restructuring of the country's socio-economic system and polity.

The Third World, of people fighting for liberation, is watching this youthful and crucial country with keen expectation.

১৩শ সংখ্যা বেরোলো

সন্নিধান

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The Peasant Situation In Western Orissa—I

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

SIMPLE statements that the peasants of the plains of India are exploited and oppressed are an insufficient basis for attacking the political system. These cannot lead to an understanding of the situation and the consciousness of the peasantry, nor contribute to the formation of any programme of revolutionary action. An attempt is made here to analyse some of the forms in which exploitation and disparity exist in one area, to see how this exploitation can take place, how the peasants react to it, and to suggest what can be done.

Western Orissa, the districts of Sambalpur and Bolangir, is an area which seems on the surface peaceful and prosperous, but a closer scrutiny reveals a different picture. The area represents a social and economic entity distinct from the rest of the State. Unlike the coastal districts, tribals are found in large numbers, but, unlike the intensely tribal districts, they are a minority of the population. The area has more plains than the tribal districts, but the soil is less fertile than the coastal low lands. Within the area, there has always been economic disparity between the plains and the hills, but the Hirakud dam has produced a much greater disparity between irrigated and merely rain-fed lands.

Apart from a growing merchant class, who are mainly outsiders, the rich derive their wealth from land. Since productive relations in agriculture are semi-feudal and peasant, the land-rich are either feudal landlords or rich peasants, now beginning to take part in capitalist farming. The continuing and increasing wealth of these classes is supported by their political power, and linked to their power over all the institutions of the society—the status system, law, development, education and wealth. The interdependence between economic conditions and

the political system is central to this analysis. Bourgeois democracy, in the hands of the ruling class, has the peculiar ability of permitting criticism while rendering it ineffective. Thus the ruling class can continue to benefit from the exploitation of the masses.

The background of all exploitation is economic disparity. While the backwardness of Orissa in the Indian Union and the disparity between the interior districts of Orissa and the dominant coastal districts are factors in the poverty of western Orissa, and essential to understanding the political charade which pass for government of the State, they cannot be dealt with here. The economic difference between canal-irrigated and dry areas is a disparity more keenly felt by the people of the districts. A large part of Sambalpur district and some of Bolangir receives water from the dam, and produces two or three crops per year. A much larger area depends on a single rain-fed crop. The neglect of these "dry" areas is to some extent because people outside the districts rarely know of their existence, and assume that the whole area is irrigated. The influence of the canal landlords is the predominant factor in the administration of the area. The Block Development Scheme and other programmes for agricultural improvement are directed almost entirely towards irrigated areas. The policy behind the "green revolution" is to direct improvements according to expediency. There are definitely more opportunities for improvement where there is irrigation and canal landlords have capital to invest in new seeds, fertilisers and insecticides. Helping the less fortunate cultivators for the sake of equality is not part of the policy. A striking, if ludicrous, example of the domination of development funds by canal landlords

occurred in one half-irrigated subdivision last year. A plague of gull-fly, a pest disastrous to paddy, hit the area. Dry villages were worse affected than canal villages, and also had no prospect of a second crop to tide them over. Stocks of the required insecticide were very low, and few could afford it anyway, as it is very expensive. Instead of providing some subsidy for insecticides for some villages of the dry area, a vast sum of money was spent to bring a helicopter from Calcutta, and to spray two irrigated villages from the air!

It is commonly assumed that an investment like a dam will bring some benefit to the entire area, since it creates more investment and employment. To some extent it is true that the dry areas receive some benefit in terms of employment. This is much less than might be supposed, however, and tends in fact to create new forms of exploitation. Industry and commerce spawned by the wealth is sited in canal-areas, and merely provides employment for those outside the areas. Certainly demand for agricultural labour at specific seasons (transplanting and harvesting) is created. This demand is met in two ways depending on the area. In the centre of the irrigated area a migrant work-force appears, drawn from among the landless of distant villages in hilly areas of the districts or Madhya Pradesh. The labourers live in inhuman conditions in makeshift hovels near their work, and earn a wage a little above subsistence level. On the fringe of the canal area, extra labour is drawn from nearby dry villages, although "nearby" must be understood to mean up to three hours' walking distance, which the labourers cover twice a day. Wages are lower here because of competition. There is the resident work-force of the canal

village itself, some migrant workers, and then the labour of nearby dry villages. Thus the customary rate remains at the paddy equivalent of Rs. 1.50 per day. At this rate a small family can survive if it has two working members, but only so long as the season lasts. The landowners are free to exploit the labour to the full, for work is not fixed by time or quantity. Despite this, from landless, poor, and middle peasant families of the dry area, whose own crops are insufficient for their needs, men, women and young children go to work.

The dominant disparity between rich and poor in all areas has the same effects as that between irrigated and dry areas. Those with the economic advantage have a large, cheap labour pool at their disposal. They gain more from development institutions. They dominate politically, so that their class-interests are presented as those of the total population. At this stage the class-structure in the area should be briefly outlined, and placed in its historical context. The conquest of Sambalpur in the 19th century by the British brought law and order to a feudal society in which tribals were predominant. Bolangir, although remaining a princely State until Independence, was forced to adjust its affairs to the satisfaction of the British. Pax Britannica formalised property relations, making feudal estates secure while giving peasants titles to land. It also facilitated the immigration of more sophisticated peasants from other areas. The possibility of acquisition of estates by purchase, default on mortgage, etc., created a new class of rich peasant cultivators. Zamindari abolition after independence affected

government but not property. Today, landlords* are a small but important class. Roughly speaking, they constitute about 5% of the population, and hold from 10% to 40% of the land. Rich peasants are a much larger class, about 15% of the population, holding up to 30% of the land. Excepting a small class of about 5% who are landless, the rest of the population is divided between middle and poor peasants more or less equally.

The word "disparity" has been used rather than reference to direct exploitation of one class by another. This is not because there is no exploitation in this sphere but because of its relatively small scope, and because a deeper analysis shows that the total exploitation and poverty of the poor and middle peasants occurs mainly because economic disparity allows the rich to seize all the institutions of the society. Landlords and rich peasants employ full-time labourers at very low rates (maximum Rs 600 p.a. in paddy), but only a small percentage of the poor peasant class are thus employed. Casual labour is seasonal and lasts only short periods, thus accounting for only a small percentage of the income of labouring families. Exploitation in the agricultural economy also occurs because the rich, with capital to invest and lend, continue to acquire land from the poor.

Basis of Domination

The basis of the total domination by the rich is that their wealth enables them to capture political institutions—power in legislatures, in panchayat samitis and grain panchayats. From this power stems their ability to exploit in other roles apart from those of land ownership.

labour of others. Rich peasants are those who work themselves, but also need to employ labour. Middle peasants are those who cultivate their own land and do not require to labour for others for survival. Poor peasants have insufficient land and have to sell their labour.

Thus they become government contractors, they manipulate relief and development funds, and they control sources of credit. They control the schools, and, more important, the school system remains geared to their interests. The poor cannot get education for increasing their consciousness, while the rich can buy qualifications for their children to permit them entry into government service. The links of common class interest and kinship between the rich and powerful and the bureaucrats give free rein to corruption, block progressive reform, and keep law and order in the hands of the rich. By combining power in all these spheres, the ruling class prevent the poorer classes from escaping from poverty. Development is impeded because the ruling class monopolise it and endorse corruption. The existing relations of production based on peasant ownership and individual cultivation are maintained, despite the great waste of resources, because the rich need to preserve the status quo. Individual cultivation prevents co-operation, and thus the utilisation of vast resources of peasant labour. Underdevelopment is perpetuated, the people remain poor but unemployed 75% of the time. It is through this complex process that the people are exploited and are continually prone to more exploitation.

Officials and contractors who enter into alliance with the ruling class in the countryside are free to exploit the people. This can be illustrated from one Development Block. Here power is manipulated by an ex-chairman of the Panchayat Samiti, boss of the local Congress party. The present chairman and the majority of the sarpanches support him, and government officers are drawn into the alliance. Contractors, even if they are not linked in partnership or kinship with the politicians, have to support this alliance. In 30 villages of the Block, suffering last year from partial or total crop-failure, relief works were organised by the Government, under the direction of the BDO. One scheme was for country

* Landlords is here used as a purely economic category. Some are from feudal families, but many are newcomers who have acquired estates. The terms used approximate to those in the Chinese Agrarian Reform Law. Landlords are those with large estates who cultivate entirely with the

roads, and workers were paid for carrying earth and stones in baskets, on piece-work terms. A given footage was calculated as a day's work, for which the labourer should receive Rs 2. The BDO came weekly to pay wages, and cut the payments by up to 50%, on the pretext that the full footage had not been dug out. By entering full payment in the records, he was able to embezzle the remainder, and to steal from the poorest class at the time of their greatest need.

During the process of this work, one incident occurred. The scheme had started late, owing to official neglect, and people were already starving. A man of about 40 years of age went to work one morning. He had not eaten properly for several days. It was summer, and intensely hot, and the labour is very hard. Within a few minutes of starting work, he collapsed. He was dead before his fellow-workers could carry him home. The BDO and the police made an inquiry, and submitted a report that death was due to "heart failure". It was fully stated that there was grain in the man's house, and he could not have died of starvation. Thus there was no danger of any blame falling on the officials responsible for the relief programme.

A large proportion of relief-money provided by the Government is for loans through the credit-cooperative banks. The rule that fresh loans cannot be given to those with outstanding debts is suspended in the case of a declared famine. The bank officials, however, mostly from the local ruling class, operate a different system. For the majority of the peasants they apply the rule that back-debts must be paid before more credit can be given. But for any one with power, contractors or local tyrant or their relatives, they waive this rule. Otherwise a large bribe is necessary to obtain a loan.

The system of farming out projects to contractors, who are notorious for their corruption, works in favour of the whole ruling class. Officials gain their profits without their own

efforts, and local politicians can gain political or economic advantages. Thus the contract system is preferred, to the extent of official refusal to operate programmes on any other basis. In the course of relief work, poor peasants of one village nominated one of their own class to superintend their work, as the rich peasants, also politicians and contractors, were cheating them. These rich peasants protested to the BDO, who refused to allow the poor peasant to superintend the work unless he paid wages from his own pocket and received the money afterwards. This he was of course unable to do, and the local tyrants took over the work again. A number of villages were also refused fair-price shops because no one would take them on contract basis, and they were not permitted to run the shops on a wage-basis. In a bad year, contract work accounts for much more of the income of poor peasants than seasonal agricultural labour. The contractors are in a very strong position. One contractor engaged in road work was paying a piece-work rate of Rs. 2. When he discovered that people were coming from villages to get work, he immediately reduced the rate to Rs. 1.50.

Because the local rich command political power, the bourgeois democratic system works to emasculate criticism of such crimes against the people. It provides a safety-valve, to release the pressure of popular dissatisfaction, without harming the functioning of the system or threatening ruling class power. One feature of this system is the phenomenon which might be called "the popular local tyrant". There are politicians who are known to be corrupt, but whom the peasants think of as friends. This they achieve by supporting popular discontent against particular abuses, thus seeming to work against their own class interests. What they are in reality doing is to divert discontent into harmless channels, while increasing their own support and power.

More significant is the role of the

full-time critics of the alliance in power, that is, people who belong to different political parties. These are people of the same class as those in power, and are mostly motivated only by their desire to seize for themselves the rewards of power. Even if these critics attack crimes against the people, they are not taken seriously, for everyone knows that the critics themselves indulge in the same abuses when they are in power. Any exceptions to this rule will usually be assumed to have the same interests as the majority. Because part of the ruling class have a vested interest in accusation, a network of lies and gossip surrounds all the dealings of political and administrative institutions. Truth is usually impossible to ascertain. All the peasants know that officials and politicians steal money meant for them, although they do not understand the intricacies of the mechanism of corruption. They cannot verify any of the accusations or counter-accusations. So they regard the proceedings of democracy with resigned cynicism, as the select group of their lords and masters indulge in an obscure ritual, in which the peasants have no part to play.

II

It is part of the folklore about peasants that they are apathetic, cynical and selfish. This has come to be accepted by non-peasants as an inherent characteristic of the peasantry, and used as an excuse by planners and officials when their projects for "rural uplift" fail. Insofar as the folklore is correct, it must be accepted. But this is only the starting point of the real work. These attitudes, their background and causes, must be analysed fully, and then decisions must be made as to how they are to be changed. For three things are clear. The first is that there will be no improvement in the living conditions in the countryside so long as the present economic structure exists and determines politics and society. Secondly, the structure will not

change unless the masses themselves take the political initiative. The third fact is that peasants in many lands have at different times become a revolutionary force, and recently this has become a major historical trend in underdeveloped countries.

A major cause of apathy is the political system by which the ruling class hold power in their own interests, but which provides the shadow of opposition without the substance. Clearly a political process in which abuses are constantly pointed out, but never remedied, and in which the accusers become themselves abusers, must have a debilitating effect on peasant consciousness. Further, the complexity of the process of exploitation is a barrier to consciousness. In a straightforward situation of direct exploitation by a class of landowners or a class of landless labourers, there is a clear class cleavage around which consciousness may develop. But, as has been argued, direct exploitation is only a small part of the total exploitation of the lower-class peasants, in this area at least, and is not solely responsible for their poverty. Disparity creates exploitation because it permits the rich to seize political power, and thus to exploit the peasants in every sphere of their life. Disparity perpetuates poverty because it negates development and change. The peasants do not understand development, nor have they any hope of a better life in the future. Centuries of living near starvation do not create great expectations. The peasants are bewildered by the complexity of the exercise of power and cannot see any possibility of resisting the monolithic alliance of the State, the officials and the rich.

It is a commonplace that peasants are selfish and narrow-minded, attached only to their small plots of land and united only with their own families. So long as they are alienated not only from the major part of the means of production, but also from the whole of the society in which they live, it is natural that they will seek refuge where they can

find some security: in the family, the land, the village, the caste—the institutions which have provided for survival through centuries of hardship and oppression. But history shows that peasant movements take place, and class-consciousness arises, when oppression becomes too harsh, or survival itself is threatened. Peasants who are at each others' throats over petty issues can become comrades in arms. Similarly caste is only a product of alienation, for people who live by the ideology of their rulers. Caste may seem to be gaining a new solidarity in the manipulations of electoral politics but in this rural area, it is breaking down. Caste feelings are becoming less antagonistic, except insofar as they contain a class component, and class solidarities begin to cut across caste barriers.

"Beggar Syndrome"

Another characteristic common to the lower class peasants is the "beggar syndrome". They resort to begging from the rich and powerful, rather than uniting to demand. Thus the customary wage for transplanting is never questioned. Rather than demanding a higher rate and trying to enforce it, by combination with other labour parties, a labour-party will attempt to wheedle small extras from the employer—a meal, a snack, a bottle of country liquor. This attitude also lies behind their relations with government officers. If "they" will give—relief money, a loan, a new school or road, land reforms—then it is good; but these are never demanded as rights. These attitudes should be seen in their social and historical context. Relations with the employer or village headman are traditionally articulated in kinship patterns. The superior is treated as a father, who can thus be expected to be generous. In return he can expect the inferior, like a son, to be a helpful and willing worker. These relationships were based on a feudal system which is vanishing. The zamindar or headman could demand free services from his subjects. In

theory, as his granaries were always full, the lord could be relied upon to see that no one starved. The high status given to begging, as the Brahmin's role, in traditional Indian culture, gives added sanction to these attitudes. Begging attitudes now enter into relations with the Government, which is seen, on the one hand, as an arbitrary and inefficient charity organisation, and on the other, as a master before whom obsequious attitudes must be shown. So the peasant thinks of begging the doctor to visit his dying child, rather than taking him by force, of begging the BDO to pay the full rate rather than beating him up if he doesn't, of begging for loans rather than gheraoing the credit co-operative officers, of begging the police not to beat him rather than taking revenge, and so on. If there is no one left to beg from, there is always God, after all.

These, and many other, backward attitudes of the peasants are the legacy of their past. They have been kept for centuries in a state of ignorance, illiteracy and superstition. Their attitudes arise from a traditional form of exploitation which rarely needed to rely on overt force, but used a persistent suppression, as the rulers in the countryside daily forced the peasants to acknowledge their inferiority. It amounted to a kind of dehumanisation, of which the institution of untouchability, invariably rooted in economic reality, is the most vicious example. Today, however, the situation is no longer static, and peasant attitudes can change. Peasant relationships to the means of production, to the ruling class, and the total economy are forcibly undergoing a process of change. It is not to be expected, nor even hoped, that such changes will produce a spontaneous change in attitudes, but it is clear that, alongside the traditional attitudes which persist and are even being adapted to new conditions, a potential for change exists.

A new and thorough analysis of the situation of the peasants is essen-

tial, to isolate the forces opposed in the countryside today, and to learn the lines along which peasant consciousness may be raised and mobilised against the exploiters. Here is suggested one approach for this analysis.

The present situation can be compared with the traditional situation of the peasants. In simplified terms, the traditional peasant economy was one of self-sufficiency at a very low level combined with exploitation by large landlords and rulers. Self-sufficiency meant that a family produced almost all its own goods, not only food, and that goods of general use not produced in the household were produced by local craftsmen. These craftsmen were integrated into the peasant economy, for they were paid in grain and were generally cultivators also. This was scarcely a utopia, as some romantics would have us think. It meant an extremely poor standard of living, and helplessness in the face of natural calamities. Above all this, there was always exploitation by landlords. It took the form of rents on land, frequently very high, taxes or forced gifts to local tyrants, forced labour and wage-labour at minimal rates.

The present situation is very different. The majority of peasants are far from self-sufficient in land, and shares decrease all the time as population grows. The rural economy is no longer self-sufficient, for all peasants need to purchase from the market essential goods like food-stuffs and clothing, as well as the new needs of a modernising society, like medicine, kerosene oil etc. All the traditional crafts are being broken up by industrial competition, and peasants need to sell produce or labour for cash in order to participate in the market. At the same time forms of exploitation have changed, from the direct demands of landlords to the combined exploitation by the rich and the government officers, as has been outlined in the first section. (In this respect variation between areas is most significant. Thus where there is widescale share-cropping te-

nancy or landlessness, which are both marginal in western Orissa, landlord exploitation is still overwhelmingly important.)

Gunnar Myrdal's concept of "cumulative pauperisation" well expresses the present situation. "A population explosion, developing market relations and the industrial competition with traditional peasant handicrafts break up the cyclical equilibrium of society. A relatively slow industrialisation is neither able to drain the countryside of its excess labour nor to provide sufficient capital accumulation. The potential surplus is swept away by growing consumption needs. In the small-producer world this is not expressed by increasing unemployment, but by 'hidden' under-employment, 'agrarian over-population', falling per capita income and increasing misery." (Shanin summarising Myrdal).

Another factor subscribing to pauperisation can be mentioned. In addition to population growth, a growing market and industrial competition, there is a change in land distribution. (The advantages derived by the rich from the so-called "Green Revolution" assist the process by which land drifts from the poorer peasants into the hands of the rich peasants. Rich peasants may not have a large surplus, but since their own family members are also increasing, they need to invest all that they can in purchasing more land. Growing pauperisation of poorer peasants makes the land available.

The explosive potential of "cumulative pauperisation" is increased by the changing relationship of the poor and middle peasants to the land. Traditional peasant attitudes, still widely prevalent today, were produced by the relationship to land of small landowners and labourers for feudal lords. Ownership produced the petit bourgeois ethic of private property, including respect for the property of the rich. Working for feudal lords produced employment relationships of a personal nature. These were relationships of utter

subservience, partly like a son to his father, partly like a slave to his owner. Now land ownership among poor and middle peasants decreases, while that of rich peasants and landlords remains stable or grows. This process diminishes respect for private property and creates resentment against the rich. Employment on the land dwindles in proportion to the working population. For the bulk of the peasantry, therefore, there remains no relationship with the landlords. They work for other sources of income, all of which change their attitudes towards employment relationships. Many drift to the towns, where, even if they find no employment, they at least come into contact with the urban proletariat. Others attempt small-scale buying and selling, and thus become aware of impersonal market relations instead of the old personal feudal ones. But it is only the Government which can, for the majority, provide any source of income to replace the loss of employment on the land. Government as employer is the most significant factor today, and will have the most fundamental effect in altering the potential of peasant consciousness.

Government as Employer

Government as employer, replacing self-sufficiency and the landlords, means that the political and economic systems become more intricately bound up together. The previous indirect and distant relationship between the peasant and the Government is replaced by the close and direct relationship of economic dependence. And it means that the employer of the peasant is the coalition of government officials and local tyrants, who exercise power over government contracts and funds. The traditional exploiters of the countryside become part of the new exploitation through government money.

The situation produces two contradictory effects on peasant consciousness. At first the peasant, bewildered by his new dependence on the Government and unused to imper-

sonal relationships, tries to convert the employment relationship into a personal one along the lines of the traditional feudal relationships. He seeks to make the local sarpanch or contractor, BDO or overseer, into his patron, hoping that he will get favoured treatment in return for his utter subservience. But he also comes gradually to grasp the meaning of an impersonal employment relationship, helped by his contacts with the urban proletariat and with petty business. He is then in a position to become angry that he is being exploited and cheated, and the potential arises that he will direct his new antagonism against the coalition of government officials and local tyrants.

The importance of this cannot be overestimated. The essential weakness of peasants has always been their preoccupation with economic struggles, and their lack of awareness of the necessity to struggle for political power. But once economic exploitation and political power are so closely welded together, the peasant is in a position to see clearly that it is the government which is exploiting him economically, and that political power is wielded by and for the benefit of his traditional exploiters. In this situation economic struggle becomes, from the outset a conscious assault on the power of the State.

(To be concluded)

CORRECTION

The issue of December 23 was No. 37, not 39 as wrongly printed.

Our agent at Varanasi

MANNALAL DAS

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Villages Revisited

NARENDRA SINGH

DURING the last week of July 1972, an opportunity led me to visit two villages of close family ties in western U.P. with which I had practically no contact for about two had decades. The shortness of the visit and the nature of contacts were obvious limitations, but even then a cursory report might be of interest. *Village A.* (45 km west of Aligarh, situated in Bulandshahr district)

The village population of 1500-1600 is more or less equally shared among four groups, comprising Thakurs, Lodhe Rajputs, Jatavs, and one heterogeneous mixture of others like, Nai, Luhar, Julaha, Bhangi, etc. besides a sprinkling of Brahmins. Different castes form practically distinct blocks of residence, with the Thakurs, Brahmins and Lodhe Rajputs in a sort of contiguous section. New constructions in the village belong to a few retired government servants and to Lodhe Rajputs, who have improved their status from agriculture. The village has no electricity.

Jatavs form the mass of landless community in the village, earning about Rs 3 per day during the season. Some of the fortunate among them are on regular employment with the landlords at Rs 900 a year, along with some paltry traditional benefits. Among the Thakurs are all landlords and some rich peasants, while almost all Lodhe Rajputs are peasants, rich and poor. In gram sabha and other organisations, the Thakurs dominate.

The agriculturally rich land has been traditionally under tubewell irrigation. From the original one or two government tubewells about two decades back, the number has gone up by another 17 private ones. Of them only one belongs to a Jatav, two to Lodhe Rajputs, two to Brahmins, and the rest to Thakurs. Tubewell owners earn extra income from sale of irrigation water. Electricity is reported to be irregular in supply,

and subject to favours from bribed operators.

In the past, sugarcane and ghee had the main economic importance in the area, the other crops being wheat, mustard and pulses, including arhar. In 1971-72, a typical rotation in one landlord's fields, with adequate fertilizers and irrigation, was maize-rape-wheat. Apparently, the high yielding cereals have relegated sugarcane to secondary economic importance. For seeds to be purchased fresh every season, there is now an imposed dependence on outside centres and sources. Arhar has altogether vanished from the scene, causing serious shortage of common household fuel. With the establishment of the Glaxo Factory in Aligarh, collecting milk from all round, ghee is no more locally produced as a commodity, with the result that matha (butter-milk), a common protein-rich home fluid, is no more available for the children, guests and others, as it used to be in the past. *Village B* (25 km east of Aligarh district town).

The village has a population of about 2000, with about 800 Thakurs, 200 Brahmins, 400 Jatavs, and the rest comprising Dhobi, Luhar, Teli, Gadaria, Kuhar, Bhangi, etc. Thakurs form a contiguous block of residence extending to one side of the village, where landlords are mostly concentrated. Brahmins are sprinkled here and there in this block. Jatavs live in two blocks within the village and the Bhangis in two hamlets close by. The obviously new constructions are on behalf of Thakurs, employed in different types of jobs outside. Some of them are planning to settle in the nearby town, but almost all of them have sustained land interest in the village, presently as absentee landlords. There is no electricity in the village.

The landless labour community is

composed of Jatavs and other 'low' castes. Thirty to forty per cent of the Thakurs are landlords. Traditionally, the land has been canal irrigated, agriculturally poor and with several usar patches. Some improvement appears to have resulted from land consolidation and installation of some tubewells. All of the existing tubewells and those planned for the near future belong to Thakurs. Persian wheel is still a common sight. Rich peasants have emerged as a group with some impoverishment of the landlords staying in the village.

One striking development has been the emergence of a school, recently upgraded to High School. About two decades back, there was only one

primary school. In the five classes of the High School, from Class VI to X, there are 150 students, most of them from Thakur families with less than 5% from the Jatavs and other 'low' castes. Almost all of the ten teachers are untrained and on remuneration less than that prescribed by the government. The school as well as other public bodies are under the dominance of the Thakurs. Gram-Utthan Sangh, a sort of youth organisation for village uplift, has its active membership from the Thakur landlord families, having leisure for such activities. The leadership has some association with the Communist Party of India.

A New Opposition : Student Power

BHARTI AZAD

THE emerging student revolt in different States must be considered in its totality,—in its present historical setting—not as an isolated phenomenon in the Indian social life. Institutionalized education has given birth to new social groupings. It is impossible to integrate these groupings into the developing capitalist system in India.

The apologists of the system are crying that the student revolt is because of the lack of necessary material facilities in the colleges and universities, lack of 'proper' education and 'guidance' to teach the young 'how to behave'. Among these are many urbanite pseudo-progressives who think that trouble is the making of rough, rude and uncivilized frustrated young men. The reformists of the status quo recommend the instant solution of a single problem—unemployment. All feel that youth is frustrated, hence in revolt. The kept reformists of the Establishment suggest university reforms, which they think is a gradual change-process. When the students consciously or unconsciously turn their backs on such reforms of bour-

geois education, they are accused of rejecting 'dialogue'.

The developing capitalism in certain pockets, the decaying feudalism in other regions, and the dualism of rural and urban life, confront the Indian youth with insoluble contradictions, not only in the educational institutions or at their working places, but also in the money-controlled economy and bourgeois society. The emerging student revolt represents, on a much broader social and historical scale, the contradictions in the bourgeois State-directed transformation of the productive forces and consequently disturbed social relations.

The contradictions between intellectual and manual labour are still developing in India. The present student revolt is not because of this realization and also not because labour—intellectual or manual—is not available. The revolt is not yet that mature to represent the historical condition which Marx foresaw in his *Grundrisse* (Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy): "the reintegration of intellectual labour into productive labour, men's intellectual capacities becoming the prime productive force,

in society." In the present phase of the developing capitalism in India, there are occurring profound changes in intellectual employment. The majority of university products (graduates) cannot become high-up bureaucrats or professionals or even direct agents of high-ups with strictly supervisory functions, but white-collar employees of the State or industry, and thus part of the great mass of salaried workers.

The student milieu has a specific character as a special social stratum, with which students from different socio-economic groups often assimilate, breaking their ties with their family environment without yet being integrated into the social environment of their professions-to-be. Among this section of the youth, there is an unwillingness to understand or accept a fundamental objective fact—that man's chief productive force will be his creative, intellectual power. In the emerging Indian capitalist society this intellectual power is only potentially productive today, because the system beats it down and stamps it out as pitilessly as it beats down the personality and creative impulse of the manual workers.

All students, particularly those living away from their homes, are partially and temporarily 'declasses', existing in a limbo between their wealthy or working class past and whatever careers or jobs they are being channeled into. Students are denied even bourgeois democratic rights. As neither workers nor owners, living under coercive rules without even the illusion of having chosen the authority over them, students share some of the experiences of the more clearly classless elements of society—the true lumpen proletariat. This experience has at least some effect on their consciousness. Their class loyalties weaken. Of course they are still largely products of their natal class. But because their class position is now ambiguous, many of them may slip out of the class roles for which they are supposedly being trained.

There is at the base of student re-

volt a high consciousness of new dimensions in Indian socio-economic life: the inefficiency of the system; administered and in a way legalized corruption, unemployment, the inflationary spiral in the economy; the acute poverty of the masses; inequalities in social and economic life; the duality in rural-urban life. Added to these is the classical alienation of labour, produced by all society based on buying and selling—in the institutional set-up of private property.

This class—the youth groupings—is becoming conscious of its 'being' and hence productive for tomorrow's social changes. The students (although with heterogeneous socio-economic backgrounds) are becoming conscious of the contradictions, injustices, and barbarities of contemporary society and the result of their becoming conscious is in themselves profoundly revolutionary. The reasons for this emerging consciousness are objective. The society in which they have to settle is not of their ideal. The so-called, self-styled custodians of society cannot be models for them. And the most important of all is the disturbed economic and hence social life of the society, directed by the State to capitalist norms and values. The student youth is becoming conscious not only of the socio-economic and political problems of the system but also about the alternative to the existing institutional system. Becoming and being conscious, they cannot remain unconcerned and neutral. It is an unquestionable fact that the revolt against the barbaric imperialist war in Vietnam arose from the students and youth of the United States. Thousands of young activists go into the streets of Paris, Berlin, London, Copenhagen, Rome, Amsterdam, and Brussels with the slogan of full and complete solidarity with the Vietnamese people, the slogan of the victory of the Vietnamese revolution.

In a society dominated by a class structure, civil liberties and personal freedom have always meant much less to those in the 'lower' classes than to those in the 'upper'. The youth

in general and the student youth in particular enjoy the 'minimum' of even this limited freedom. For them as for the masses in general, the concept of freedom in Indian society is permeated by monetary values; it is just another commodity available to those who have the money to buy it.

Criteria of Action

There is at present a divergence between the satisfaction of certain immediate interests of students as a category and the politico-strategic needs of the movement. This drastic choice accentuates the difference between the active nucleus and the majority of the students. Because of the ambiguous class situation of the students, one cannot apply to them criteria of action which would be valid for the working classes. In the student movement at present there is a relative lack of immediate tactical objectives. The basic lack is of extra-academic objectives on a level with the rest of society. This is inevitable at present, since the student movement as a force is simply not self-sufficient enough for a confrontation with the system and since the other forces which would be decisive in such a confrontation (the working class and its organizations) are not taking up any radical line of confrontation at present.

At the moment the students' movement is not integrated with the workers' movement, because the latter has failed to develop fully and because the traditional organizations of the workers are profoundly bureaucratized and have long since been co-opted into the bourgeois society. When the workers' movement is 'open' (without multiple barriers as suggested repeatedly by Marx and Lenin), most of the workers succumb to the preponderant influence of bourgeois society. However, the students can free themselves from the constant moulding instruments in the service of bourgeois society, because they are in a more privileged social and intellectual situation than the workers. To the extent students in India are not free from

bourgeois propaganda machinery, the fault is characteristic of the failure of the Indian leftist movement, as inner conscious groupings among the students are lacking.

An urgent task is the integration of the students' movement with the workers'. The workers' movement must win back the students, particularly inasmuch as the students are workers. But this is possible only if the bureaucratized structure of the traditional workers' organizations is 'democratized' and new workers' organizations formed in the rural areas. The alliance of workers and student-youth is a must for the fundamental transformation of the existing set-up which is immoral, inefficient and corrupt and based on exploitation of the working classes. Students by virtue of their place in the society alone cannot succeed in creating a new society. They can play a powerful role as detonator. By playing this role with the working class, they can free in the working class itself enormous forces for challenging the emerging capitalist society and the existing bourgeois State apparatus. The basis of any student-worker alliance will be their common aims and objectives in taking control of their respective working situations.

Today's young people see the society in which they have been born as one based on competition and violence, in which decent human relations are impossible. The historical role of the young people, springing from their receptiveness to new and challenging ideas, has been that of torch-bearers—new path breakers—in the field of ideas and ideology. The older generation have much to learn from them. The system that alienates the individual also denies the millions at home the essentials of a decent life. Provided all those who seek a new order in which creative human relations are possible unite against the main target, their struggle will prove decisive in the world.

The young people, especially the students, are the most active and vital force in society. They are the most eager to learn and the least con-

servative in their thinking. This is especially so in the present historical epoch. They should dare to think and dare to act and struggle because it is right to rebel. Rebellion against the existing institutional set-up is justified. They should struggle, criticize, repudiate and transform.

Book Review

Changing Patterns*

WASP

WHAT is the measuring rod of success and happiness? Tolstoy implied that since man lives on love, the amount of love you get and give is the measure of your success in life. But he was obviously a fool—otherwise he would not have died a miserable death in the arms of mother Russia.

The rustic fool of our popular anecdote was really smarter. Once he was missing from the village for a few days. As he returned home everybody started questioning him about where he had been. Perhaps they thought it was another of his drunken escapades, but he violently protested. He had been to Calcutta—he said. "Calcutta?" the villagers were amazed, "What did you see there?" "I saw Rani Rashmoni". "Rani Rashmoni? Tell us how she looks." The villagers were sceptical.

"Oh, she is a huge woman—bigger than an elephant. I found her sitting on a bed with thick cushion and two quintal-size sacks in front. The right one contained sugar and the left one flat rice (dhira). When she turns right she puts a handful of sugar in her mouth and when she turns left she puts another handful of rice in her mouth."

So, that is the peak of success he

could conjure up. Yes, according to him happiness can be measured in terms of sweets and cereals, beds and cushions.

But this idea is not the monopoly of the drunken rustic.

Frank Macfarlane Burnet, MBBS (Melb) PhD (Lond). Knight Bachelor, Order of Merit, FRS, FAAS, President, Australian Academy of Sciences, ScD and DSc of eight universities, MD (Philadelphia), FRCP, FACP, FRACP—well I am tired. There are still two more pages in his curriculum vitae. So let me mention he is a Nobel Laureate also and stop. He is considered one of the world authorities in virology, immunology, autoimmune diseases etc. His clonal selection theory is one of the most important contributions to biology in recent times. This theory throws new light not only on immunology and autoimmune diseases but on cancer and oncology also. The book is really worth reading. Anybody interested in the development of modern medical theory and its development during the last fifty years should go through this book. The strange story of a young wasp¹ collector slowly but steadily rising to the top in world biology will almost sound like a fairy tale. The bacteria which feed on the higher animals, the virus which feeds on bacteria and the nucleic acid chain which we call a virus and which is the link between the living and the non-living make fascinating reading and when you know it is coming from a world authority, your interest becomes more absorbing.

But don't forget his skin is white and his blood is blue. He comes from the WASP² community. (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant). Whether in England or in the USA, in Australia or New Zealand the dominating drive of this tribe has been to rule the world by superior knowledge if possible or by bluff, bluster, fire and sword if necessary.

So, with his accurate information and depth of knowledge and the pose of an ivory-tower scientist he cannot

afford to forget the dominant drive of the tribe. For that he is even ready to commit errors of omission and commission. He goes to the southern States of the USA, tries to develop sympathy for the oppressed blacks and hears about the atrocities of the Americans in Vietnam. But he doesn't hate that monstrosity, I mean the USA. He remembers many good men of American origin.

In his ivory-tower attitude he tries to remind us that no important medical discovery has been made on the other side of the iron curtain. Yes, he uses the phrase iron curtain for the communist world but does not use any vile epithet, for the bloody mess, created and maintained round the world by the WASP. That reminds me he was a wasp collector in his childhood. Here he conveniently forgets the amputation surgery and burn treatment of the Chinese, the stupendous success of preventive medicine in communist China as well as other socialist countries. He forgets that the gang of WASPS could not control VD in the UK or Australia, New Zealand or the USA. But Mao's China could. Well, that doesn't transgress the norm of scientific truth. This incidentally reminds us of the career of another doctor, a petty FRCS of England, Dr Joshua S. Horn³. The poor fellow left his career in England and went to China to serve the sick and ailing—the inscrutable Chinese. Yes, but he considered them his own brother. He could not equate his cereal and sugar, bed and cushion with his success and ideal. He wanted to share his knowledge with the world people. To him success of medical science meant the happiness of humanity as a whole, white and black, yellow and brown. So, he could not profess his success from an ivory-tower top. But Dr Burnet can. He is a Nobel Laureate, I ask my readers to salute him. But beware of this type of science and scientists. They can produce anti-virus vaccines. They can produce virus to kill yellow, black and brown. Don't forget they are scien-

* An atypical autobiography

by Sir Macfarlane Burnet

Publisher: William Heinemann, Melbourne, London.

Price: 63/- nett

tists but they are WASPS also. They may bite, they have got venom.

Yohannan Mathai

1 & 2—1) Any of various hymenopterous insects with larvae that are parasitic on other arthropods.

2) (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant): an American of English Protestant ancestral background.

Page 1005 Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary. 1969.

Publisher: Scientific Book Agency

3) *Away with all pests...*

An English Surgeon in People's China

By Dr Joshua S. Horn, FRCS, MB,BS

Publisher: Paul Hamlyn

London New York/Sydney/Toronto.

Barricade

BY A DRAMA CRITIC

UTPAL Dutt's *Barricade* (Kalamandir, December 25) may serve to renew his credentials with a political party whose neglected cause he has taken up in a spirit of personal atonement. The play suggests a parallel between the electoral reverses suffered by this party and the repression in Hitler's Germany. Much contriving is needed to make the parallel hold, which nevertheless breaks down at several points. The facts seem intransigent to such gross over-simplification. Dutt's treatment of the Nazi terror loses much by his political reconversion. Even the laughter is marred by a narrow party bias. A comparison with Brecht's *Arturo Ui*, from which *Barricade* takes much, brings out the shallowness of Dutt's caricature. The extremely narrow limits of its points of reference give it a one-dimensional character. Its allusive context severely restricts the play's appeal and effectiveness as a parody.

Barricade is not going to enhance Utpal Dutt's reputation as our foremost man of the theatre. Though not much of a playwright, he has hitherto shown quite a way of presenting his plays, his own or others', which has left its mark on our stage tradition. Once he could boast a troupe of artistes which would any day beat any other, both man for man and collectively, in sheer virtuosity, zest and popular rapport. But his PLT is a poor successor to the

old Little Theatre Group. The sets and Tapas Sen's lighting are the only reminders of the old days. Again, with the exception of Satya Bandyopadhyaya, who gives a brilliant portrayal of his role, such as it is, the whole troupe acts with only modest competence. Utpal Dutt himself has somehow lost his old touch and fails to convince. In conceiving his role as a political *mastan* of the left he may have sought to reconcile a personal contradiction. The *mastan* combines a faith in the power of the barrel (of a pipe-gun, perhaps?) with adherence to a political party unconscionably given over to fighting elections. Thus, at the end, Utpal Dutt makes his *barricade* a sort of popular or united front whose ranks are swelled by penitent intellectuals like him.

The specious formula must gladden the hearts of the politicians from whose grace Dutt had once fallen, for a brief aberration. Now he falls over backwards to win back his kudos. Lines like "Let the police withdraw for an hour and our boys will settle the hash of...", which Dutt gives himself in the play, are more reminiscent of one of their leaders here than their counterparts in Hitler's Germany. In a sense *Barricade* is a dramatised version of the innumerable speeches made by this leader at home and abroad after his defeat in election. The two long court-scenes and several incidents are meant to show the rigging of justice and elec-

tions and how, false implication of the party in murder and arson is calculated to seal its fate at the polls.

Utpal Dutt should however know that not only has much water flown down the Rhine (as the newspaper says in the play) and the Ganges, but much blood too, down the lanes and by-lanes of Calcutta, in unknown fields and in houses, in known prisons and police-vans since the day he could capture the imagination of his audience. He vainly tries to reduce this story of rare if misguided heroism, mutual brutality and counter-violence of reaction, to a political party's case of rigged defeat at the polls. Much more is involved than the mere question of justice and legality and some worthless people's claim to office.

Having said so much in disapproval one still gets struck by what Utpal Dutt is capable of in the way

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of stage production. Much reduced in acting ability as the troupe is, he can yet get the very best out of it with his able direction. The sets combine realism with symbolic overtones. In one scene this is done most effectively with swastika-painted flags hanging in an ominous array. The décor and goings-on in the court-scenes combine burlesque and realism with Brechtian effect, but poverty of language and characterization makes the two long scenes of trial extremely dull. It is in these scenes that the drama gets bogged in cliché and triviality. The introduction of the main characters like dummies with their heads and limbs projecting through holes is an adaptation from Brecht. Such gimmicks including the mimes do not set the tone of the play with a melodramatic conclusion. The opening song and dialogues are irrelevant. The choice of recorded music is, however excellent and the costumes are designed with propriety. Tapas Sen's lighting creates some superb effects as in the projection of Hitler's shadow. But with all this, can Utpal Dutt recapture his old glory?

A Significant Painter

SANDIP SARKAR

DILIP Kundu, a painter in his late twenties (born 1943), has compelled critics to recognise him as one of the most powerful painters of Calcutta today. He belongs to the group of artists who call themselves Calcutta Painters. DK has exhibited his paintings in group shows since 1962, not only in Calcutta, but also in other major cities of India. Strangely enough, this is his first one-man show.

Besides painting DK teaches art in the Deaf and Dumb School and this may be a key to understanding his paintings. As a teacher he has to watch his students grapple with the problem of expressing their experience and feeling without the help of

words. DK has been forced into the world of pure colours free of the corrupt influence of sound.

Significantly enough, in the first solo exhibition, DK depicts man's soul (symbolised as a bird in twenty-five paintings and drawings) in a vast empty space. He has used acrylic emulsion and synthetic enamel paints to give a transparent, almost dream-like dimension to his paintings. In this semi-figurative world, grey and occasional black intensify the 'bright' colours and emphasise joy even in suffering. DK's paintings are symphonies of passion. Yet everything seems to be under control. Tones are in harmony of juxtaposition. Colours are contrasted. Nothing is confused. There is a definite sequence of lines used in every composition. Although very subjective DK has been able to restrain his emotions. Especially 14, 24, 25 are like mirrors that throw back the image to the viewer.

DK's paintings are social comments of a different order. Social restrictions have paralysed man in such a way that he now finds himself unable to communicate the nuances of his feelings and emotions.

Letters

Peking And CP(ML)

Mr Arani Ghosh's (December 2) arguments are too weak to justify his doubts.

First, he ought to have known better when he wrote that "Charu Mazumdar was always the Chairman" of the CPI(ML). In fact, the Party had no Chairman and Charu Mazumdar was elected General Secretary when the Party was formed in 1969, and again, at the first meeting of the Central Committee held immediately after the Party Congress in May 1970.

Second, it should not cause surprise if leaders of the Chinese Communist Party pointed out that Lin's observation—"Guerilla warfare is the only way to mobilize and apply the whole strength of the people against the

enemy"—was related only to principles of warfare. One may refer to the following passages in Lin Piao's "Long Live the Victory of People's War": "In the enemy-occupied cities and villages, we combined legal with illegal struggle, united the basic masses and all patriots..." etc. (Chapter 3) and "The main form of struggle was war and the main form of organization was the army which was under the absolute leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, while all the other forms of organization and struggle led by our Party were co-ordinated, directly or indirectly, with the war." (Chapter 4). These will show that the Party leadership's interpretation of Lin's above observation on guerilla warfare—the interpretation that guerilla warfare is the only form of struggle or that "guerilla war is the only tactic of the peasants' revolutionary struggle"—was wholly wrong.

Moreover, guerilla war is a form of people's war and can be waged only with the active help and co-operation of the people. What the Party leadership called guerilla war was actually secret annihilation of individuals carried out by groups of militants secret from the people and secret even from the Party units not sufficiently accustomed to underground work. Naturally, there is a fundamental difference between individual terror practised by secret groups and the revolutionary violence of an aroused people, between "the battle of annihilation of class enemies" as understood by the Party and guerilla warfare as conceived by Lenin or Mao Tse-tung.

Thirdly, the "alleged letter" from Sanyal and others dealt only with the "valuable fraternal suggestions" from the Chinese Communist Party and the refusal of the Party leadership to benefit from those suggestions and correct its left-adventurist deviations. It referred to the abnormal situation within the Party and the breaking up of the Party into different groups and factions without naming their leaders and suggests the way of building a new unity. The purpose of the letter was not to offer an appraisal of the national or the international situation,

"Bangladesh and so on."

Mr Arani Ghosh declares that "from the middle of 1971 'the ultra-leftist activities' had in fact come to a virtual stop" but does not explain what he means by "ultra-leftist activities".

Do these mean "the battle of annihilation of class enemies" around which the entire tactical line of the Party was built at a particular stage and which received approval at the Party Congress? If so, when did the Party repudiate that line and withdraw the Party Congress documents and other writings that initiated and upheld that line? On the contrary, the reports and reviews from different State Committees and Regional Committees, published in the July 1971-January 1972 issue of *Liberation* (that came out in March 1972), strongly upheld the annihilation-of-class-enemies line and "ultra-leftist activities". Mr Arani Ghosh's statement is not justified by facts.

One should understand the difference between paying tribute to a revolutionary and supporting his wrong line. Perhaps Mr Arani Ghosh is not aware that Chowdhari Tejeswara Rao and other "eminent" leaders of Andhra issued a pamphlet in the name of the Srikakulam District Committee of the Party about two years ago blaming the Party-line and the Central leadership for the setback in Srikakulam. Reference to this difference was made by the present Andhra State Committee in its review published in July 1971-January 1972 issue of *Liberation*. The "alleged letter" should not be a surprise to Mr Ghosh if he remembers that the leadership of all important areas of peasant struggle—Srikakulam, Mushahari, Monghyr, Lakhimpur-Kheri, Midnapur-Baharagora, Birbhum and Naxalbari, if the letter is treated as authentic—has rebelled against the Party-line, each in its own way and at different times.

Fourthly, Mr Ghosh argues that the six leaders could not have sent out the letter from prison without compromising their "proven integrity". It may be recalled that these leaders, who are all implicated in a case brought by the Andhra police against them,

met at Visakhapatnam during their trial in July this year and were reported to have sent out the joint letter. Will it be a revelation for Mr Ghosh that revolutionaries "languishing in jail under the strictest surveillance all round" have successfully maintained contact with their organizations outside not only now but also in the past? Does he not know that an article sent by Kanu Sanyal from jail was published by the CPI(ML) in 1971?

It is known to many that a Party representative, one of the most trusted comrades of Charu Mazumdar, visited Peking and brought back from the Chinese Communist Party "most valuable fraternal suggestions in respect of our liberation struggle in India in the month of November 1970", as stated in the "alleged letter". It is also known to many that the above Party representative, who made the report to Charu Mazumdar, remained a firm adherent of Charu Mazumdar's line and tried to implement it faithfully till his arrest by the police. Perhaps one may remember that in their published document on the national questions Asim Chatterjee and his associates (Bengal-Bihar-Orissa Border Regional Committee) demanded a circulation of this criticism. It will be seen from the published replies of Charu Mazumdar and the West Bengal State Committee that they did not deny the existence of the CPC's criticism but that they preferred silence on this question. If the "suggestions" contained in the "alleged letter" were not offered by the CPC, then what were the CPC's actual suggestions? Besides the Bengal-Bihar-Orissa Border Regional Committee, the West Bengal-Bihar Border Regional Committee and a member of the Central Committee of the Party are known to have demanded circulation of the Party representative's report but there was no response from Charu Mazumdar.

Mr Ghosh has said that "by the early part of this year Charu Mazumdar was himself advocating a more open-ended (united front strategy". What he means by "open-ended united front strategy" is not clear. The

Party has always mentioned the necessity of building the united front. At one phase the Party leadership believed that "the battle of annihilation of class enemies could solve all our problems", including the problem of building the united front. If 'ultra-leftist activities' had in fact come to a virtual stop, what is the tactical line adopted to implement the "more open-ended united front strategy"? Will the Party work through mass organizations and participate in mass movements and try to rally the people around both economic and political slogans to implement the "more open-ended united front strategy" with a view to accomplishing the People's Democratic Revolution? Or, will the underground Party remain withdrawn within its own shell, as before? Indeed, a storm of people's struggles will soon break out in this country. If the Party could carry out democratic land reforms, i.e., if it could abolish feudalism, in some parts of the country, that would surely create a tremendous upsurge. But that presupposes the creation of base areas. Except in base areas, the agrarian revolution cannot be carried out. The question is, how can base areas be created? Previously, the Party leadership believed that only "the battle of annihilation of class enemies" could create base areas. If the class-annihilation-line has been abandoned, what is going to replace it? These questions may seem too much of this earth, earthy, and lacking in a dream-like quality, but mere wishing them away will serve no purpose. These questions can only be answered if the experiences of the struggles of the past years are summed up in the light of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought. It will not serve the cause of revolution if the science of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought is treated as a cult of *bhakti*. Chairman Mao said: "The troubles that have befallen our nation are extremely serious, and only a scientific approach and a spirit of responsibility can lead it on to the road of liberation. There is but one truth, and the question of whether or not one

has arrived at it depends not on subjective boasting but on objective practice. The only yardstick of truth is the revolutionary practice of millions of people." (*On New Democracy*).

Wrong politics ("the ultra-leftist activities", to quote Mr Ghosh) have shattered the Party into groups and factions: correct politics alone can rebuild the Party, strengthen it and unite the different revolutionary forces, and on the basis of this new unity the Party can link itself with the innumerable struggles of the people, lead and co-ordinate them in a vast struggle, the main form of which will be armed struggle. Under the leadership of such a Party—armed with Marxism-Mao Tsetung Thought and disciplined, linked closely with the masses, able to integrate theory with practice and ready to make self-criticism when mistakes occur—the people of our country will accomplish the People's Democratic Revolution and march towards socialism. The group of revolutionaries that can correctly sum up the experiences of past struggles, make concrete analysis of the concrete conditions in this country, and provide the correct political line in today's confused situation, will surely be able to rebuild the Party and unify and strengthen it.

Ajoy Roy
Calcutta

False Cases

Calcutta
21.12-72

Madam,

Re: *False cases in West Bengal Law Courts.*

On the eve of your departure to Calcutta to attend Congress Session, I beg to draw your kind attention to the agonies of the families (especially of parents) of the youngsters who have been falsely implicated in Court cases in West Bengal.

There are many Jainal Abedins in West Bengal (if not throughout India) who do not hesitate to ad-

duce false evidence in Court cases against persons whom they do not like.

And the persons falsely implicated are practically helpless in Courts because they have not enough means to defend themselves properly in prolonged trials.

State help in this respect is worse than useless.

Yours faithfully
(R. P. Sinha)

P.S.: Kindly ask your party members and supporters (Naba Congress) not to give false evidence nor to procure false witnesses for the police, which they are now doing energetically, in Calcutta and other parts of West Bengal. They are even procuring approvers who did not take part in the crime.

Smt Indira Gandhi
Prime Minister of India
1, Safdarjang Road
New Delhi-11

Mistake

Mr Phani Bhusan Ghosh's letter (December 23) has brought to my notice a serious printing mistake in my letter published on November 25. I had written in my letter "communalism stems the tide of a people's revolution". This sentence was printed as: "communalism stems from the tide of a people's revolution". This completely alters the meaning of the sentence.

TARULATA DOLEY
Sibsagar, Assam

Harassing Lawyers

On behalf of the Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights, I strongly condemn the police for harassing and threatening Sri Indrajit Roy Chaudhuri, Advocate, only because he has moved bail on behalf of Sarbasri Sauren Bose and Santosh Rana. (Ref: *Frontier*, 23-12-72). Such police action goes against the fundamental constitutional rights of

Indian citizens and bears proof of high-handed interference of the police with the administration of justice and freedom of legal profession.

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