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## HAWKS AND DOVES

PERHAPS it was the size of her public meeting in Lucknow that made Mrs Gandhi think with confidence that she was the people and the State; and that the movements in Bihar and elsewhere were therefore anti-people. She at times roared like a wounded tigress: the Opposition has been given enough latitude, but no more of this nonsense, the Congress is going to hit back. The Opposition does not want any change in the present set-up and therefore would like to unseat the fast-changing Congress. It will not be allowed to do so.

Maybe in heart of hearts Mrs Gandhi knows her debt to some of the opposition parties and their movements. Give the radical leaders a forum in the shape of assembly and parliament, with the promise of sneaking into partial power for even a few months, and you trap them in a greasy process which they cannot get out of. Mrs Gandhi and her men and women are throwing hints, now and then, of snap elections, of electoral reform. And the opposition parties are gearing their rusty machinery for a surprise poll and talking themselves hoarse about how to plug the loopholes in the election apparatus. They should know that it will be extremely difficult to beat Mrs Gandhi in any election—she has very little scruple and enough funds any number of strong-armed men belonging to the younger generation and the entire administration behind her. She has foreign powers to back her financially and intelligence-wise. Yet, hope dies hard and the opposition parties which have done almost nothing to help the people, have again started banking on elections.

JP, of course, belongs to no party, though some parties are helping him. He can be partyless, because in his scheme of total revolution the workers and peasants have little role to play. The demands of the workers and the peasants come in conflict with the interests of the ruling classes and JP perhaps, wants a united front of sorts against the ruling Congress; he does not want his partyless harmony to be disturbed by echoes of class conflict. The result? Instead of a Bihar without the Assembly and the Ministry, you have the stage being set for the next election. Jaya Prakash Narayan has been able to save Bihar from going up in flames, as a pro-Congress Bihar MLA pointed in the State Assembly. Glory be to JP if the groundswell of discontent, to which he has given some shape and expression, continues to be peaceful—and ineffective even in the short run. In that case Mrs Gandhi will be able to roar and rule. The 500,000 volunteers the Congress wan

to mobilise and train will do well in facing the opposition parties. After the Congress camp at Behala, some 20 Congress boys were able to break up an

RSP meeting at Dum Dum, once a bastion of the CPM, thus outlining the shape of things to come on a much wider scale than in the previous elections.

## Fall From Radicalism

Once again the air is full of stories that New Delhi is contemplating a major shift in the industrial policy. The object of this exercise, according to these reports, is to relax the curbs on big business and monopoly houses and to allow them once more to freely expand and diversify. The much-talked-about recession also somehow fits in with this arrangement. Interested papers are giving out stories whose main contention is that the recession cannot just be avoided unless the private sector is once again given blanket permission to do whatever it likes. There is almost a suggestion of a straight deal in all this hullabaloo. Unless the Government gives more latitude to the sharks of big business, they will make sure that the recession really sets in; but they will go all out to avoid the recession if they are given a blank cheque. Big business is of course aware that the so-called anti-monopolies restrictions that the ruling party has so ornately put in in its manifesto do not really mean much; it can do—as indeed it is doing—whatever it likes, only a little surreptitiously. But even this it now wants to go. The ruling party in its turn is also too eager to make the surrender; it has realised that it is bad politics to try to keep a show of hostility towards people who after all are paying it all the money. The only trouble is that undoing a radical image is very often a rather painful thing. Of course the ruling caucus does not attach any inflated importance to what the public thinks of it—it can well go to the dogs—but then a radical stance makes even buying of votes a little easier.

There are people who think that there is nothing against making such changes in policies as would help raise production and create more employment. But the fact is that increased production does little to bring down the prices or

even to create employment, with all the entrepreneurs going in for fashionable capital-intensive methods. The worst thing is that the people or society gets little of this extra money from extra production. It all goes only to line the pockets of the haves; the already top-heavy distribution system gets further askewed in favour of a handful of the rich and the masses are left merely to suck their fingers. With capitalist distribution and socialist efficiency, it is perhaps too much to expect anything better.

## Currency & Finance

The Reserve Bank of India in its report on "Currency and Finance 1973-74" clearly states that the Indian economy has landed itself in a mess. In fact, it has brought to light the dire results of pursuing the capitalist path of economic development. In brief, during the year July 1973 to June 1974 there was gloom on every front. Prices soared, the growth rate of the national economy remained nearer zero, the number of unemployed increased and there was a fall in the living standards of the common people. The Fifth Plan proved to be a non-starter and industrial production failed to pick up. During 1973-74 there was an all-round increase in prices and the Government and the monetary authorities failed to check it. The economic adviser's general index (1961-62=100) registered an increase of 27.9 per cent during 1973-74. By June 1974, it reached 308.9. If one takes into account the past two years i.e. 1972-73 and 1973-74, one finds that the index went up at the rate of 2.3 per cent per month. During 1973-74, though there was an improvement on the production front, the prices increased at a higher rate than

they did in 1972-73. The main reason for this was hoarding and profiteering by traders and capitalist farmers in the matter of foodgrains and by monopolists and their distribution in industrial commodities on the one hand and the near-total breakdown of the public distribution system on the other.

Both the big producers and the distributors knew that the total availability of consumer goods was far short of demand and it was a golden opportunity to fleece the people by increasing the gap between demand and supply through hoarding. They pressurised the Government to give up wholesale trade which—not to speak of its extension to other foodgrains. The people's faith—which never was very marked—in the Government's capacity to make essential items of consumption available to them and curb hoarding and profiteering was shaken. This has been admitted by the RBI report. It shows that India has hitched its wagon to the capitalist world system and, therefore, has to suffer from the ills of imperialist economies. The inflation in the imperialist countries has led to a sharp increase in India's import bill. Consequently, India's visible balance of trade has gone into the red. During 1973-74, there was a huge deficit of Rs 438 crores in spite of an impressive increase in exports.

The RBI report says that during 1973-74, the growth of employment in the organised sector was very meagre. It declined to around 1.5 per cent. Since production is increasing at the rate of 2.5 per cent, it means, there was an increase of a few millions in the army of the unemployed. The report reveals that the number of applicants on the live registers of employment exchanges increased by 10 per cent from 75.96 lakhs in June 1973 to 83.54 lakhs in June 1974. The number of educated employed went up from 26 lakhs to 35.29 lakhs. The RBI urges mobilisation of more investible resources and suggests that the potentiality of the agricultural sector should be fully tapped. It emphasises that "there is thus the possibility of supporting a conditional investment with additional resources mobilisation". In other words, there is no truth in the assertion of Messrs Subramaniam and Pai that there

this is no secret <sup>being</sup> and the public sector (whatever <sup>it</sup> is to the country) because of lack of <sup>resources</sup>.

## Taken For A Ride

The West Bengal College and University Teachers' Association is perhaps losing its euphoria over the Union Education Minister, Mr Nurul Hassan's promise of a drastic pay hike for teachers in all private colleges and the universities. None of the States has accepted the new scales, nor are most of them likely to, in view of the doldrums in which their finances are, as well as politically more urgent calls on their resources. But the hopes raised once ran so high that, immediately following the announcement in Parliament, gushing messages of thankfulness poured forth from all directions. The teachers, who are our leading intellectuals, forgot all about the dire economic crisis and stagnation and yielded to the lure of a mirage. Most of them persuaded themselves that they were at last coming into their own, their role as "nation-builders" being recognised in high places. Mr Nurul Hassan being a professor himself (perhaps still holding a lien on his academic assignment), it was even suggested that this favourable turn in fortune might be ascribed to his personal interest in his more substantive career prospects, if not also to a desire for the well-being of his profession as a whole. It is hard to think of duffers so self-deluded and shrewd at the same time.

But the greatest wonder is that even teachers who claim to be critical of the Government and swear by this or that leftist ideology, fell for the idea. The extent to which the new hopes took hold of the leftist leaders in the WBCUTA can be measured by their sudden change of tactics at the last annual general meeting. This came just on the eve of the announcement of the new scales which the WBCUTA leaders must have got wind of, for they decided to sink their political differences and filled the key executive posts by consensus. The effect of this new leftist tactic in WBCUTA was to foist a Congressman as general

secretary, who would have stood no chance of getting elected in a free and fair contest. The sacrifice, it was thought, would induce the Government of West Bengal to introduce the new scales. So far this self-denying gesture of the leftists has drawn a blank. For the leftists to have believed in the efficacy of such policy was the height of folly and gullibility. The WBCUTA is welcome to turn itself into an all-party "trade union" front, for it has long settled down to a routine, but largely futile, exercise in movement for economic privileges. But then the political commitments of most of its constituents, who are allegedly of leftist persuasion, would stand exposed as a hollow sham.

Most college and university teachers in our country are poor and underprivileged. But much more so are primary and secondary school teachers, to say nothing of the vast bulk of the educated unemployed. All these put together form only a slender fringe of the country's total population, the great majority of whom live in far greater poverty and degradation. Compared with the latter, even the underprivileged sections of the middle class cannot be doing so badly after all. If instead of casting in their lot with this vast majority in an effort to bring an end to the unjust social order, the college and university teachers insist on sharing the loot now reserved to the privileged sections, there is everything to be said for such an attitude. But then the teachers would have to shed their radical pretensions and must not jib at the price their rich patrons and the government would necessarily exact for a share in the spoils. It would otherwise be sheer imbecility to expect favour from a ruling class which relies on naked violence to bleed the masses white. It looks as though the WBCUTA including its CPI(M) and other leftist constituents, is making a dead set for such favours at any price, in an effort to turn the poor teachers into mandarins. Whether the effort is going to be rewarded is another matter.

## Taxing Credibility

A correspondent writes:

One of the fringe benefits which the Government has reaped from the assorted noise made by J. P. Narayan smugglers, and Tulmohan Ram is the defocussing of income tax raids. Only a few months ago the newspapers were full of them and AIR even ran regular bulletins. Whether or not the media were then manipulated for obtaining propaganda mileage out of what should have been a normal activity of the Tax Department, the Government did succeed in creating an impression that it meant business in going after tax evaders. Not a day passed when the newspapers did not splash reports of two or three raids in the course of which, it was invariably given out, large amounts of cash, jewellery, stocks and "incriminating documents" were seized. But even in those days when Mr K. P. Ganesh did his McLuhanesque best to make the medium (his) message, few cared to find out what happened later to the much publicised seized materials, how much was quietly returned and how much finally appropriated as due tax. Now that Tulmohan Ram et al have pushed the income tax raids out of the news media, the Government is spared even the off chance of anyone asking for information.

In reply to a question, the Finance Minister, Mr Subramaniam, informed the Rajya Sabha earlier this month that up to October 31 the Income Tax Department had carried out 1065 searches and seized assets valued at Rs. 9.05 crores. Not exactly a spectacular performance considering that the Wanchoo Committee's conservative estimate of tax evasion was Rs. 1400 crores in 1968-69 alone and further considering that the Department has been having extensive powers of search and seizure since at least, 1965. But even so, one might have given an approving nod if the Finance Minister's reply, unlike the Bikini, did not, by implication, conceal more than it revealed.

For, the simple fact is that seizures do not mean a thing until regular assessments proving concealments are made.

On seizing the assets, all that an income tax officer is required in law to do is to pass an order, within ninety days, for retaining the seized materials in his custody. Which is a far cry from proving, in an assessment which is upheld in appeals, that the seized materials represented tax evaded income. If one goes by the number (not even a dozen in the last as many years) of tax evad-

ers prosecuted and sent to jail, to do which tax officials have always had ample powers, then it is a reasonable guess that the flaunted 1065 raids would ultimately prove to have been so much smoke.

But then why should one assume that the Government actually wanted to catch the tax thieves?

## Investment Strategy For Promoting Inequality

ASHOK RUDRA

**D**URING the Fifth Five Year Plan the Government proposes to spend Rs. 120 crores for the establishment of new TV centres. This is in addition to the nearly Rs. 30 crores spent during the Fourth Plan. For whose benefit are these Rs. 150 crores being spent? There were till 1970 only 25,000 licences issued. Allowing an eight-fold multiplication during the fourth and fifth plan periods there would be, by 1978, just about 200,000 families who would be having this highly expensive toy. The Government proposes to spend, from funds raised from the masses, as much as Rs. 150 crores, or Rs 7,500 per licence holder, for enabling a handful of people to play with these toys. At a time when the same plan can make provision for no more than Rs. 105 crores for "slum improvement".

The Fifth Plan also proposes to spend as much as Rs. 487 crores to enable 70,000 new direct telephone connections. This means that investments at the rate of Rs. 7,000 per subscriber will be made from public funds to benefit a handful of persons. In addition another Rs. 344 crores is proposed to be spent on long distance telephones. Who talks over long distance telephones? A very tiny fraction of the few who use telephones at all: businessmen, speculators and bureaucratic busybodies who mostly never pay from their pockets. Compare this Rs. 800 crores and above provided for the telephone-using elite

with the modest sum of Rs. 57.50 crores provided for the improvement of the postal services—the only means of communication used by the masses. One knows that the postal services in the country are far from adequate—it takes letters days to reach from one point to another, even in the same State. But not only have the masses of post-office users to put up with poor postal services; they are in fact made to pay for the luxury provided to the telephone users. It is stated that the plan outlay of nearly Rs. 1,100 crores will be financed to the tune of Rs. 900 crores from "internal resources". This only means that the masses of people who write post cards and inland letters will be paying more than what it costs to carry those cards and letters so that a micro-scopic elite can use telephones.

### Housing

Consider housing. We have seen that for "slum improvement" in the entire country the plan provides only Rs 105 crores. As against this Rs 100 crores is provided for "office and residential accommodation for central government employees". This makes clear the scale of values of our planners: equal importance to the slum dwellers of our cities and the privileged class of central government employees. The houses enjoyed by higher level central government employees represent a luxury that is probably beyond the reach of the compara-

ble categories of employees even in the most affluent countries of the world. The top bureaucrats of New Delhi live in villas with a dozen or more rooms, surrounded by gardens extending over acres of land, maintained by malis (gardeners) who also are paid not by the occupants but by the government. The rental of such a villa in New Delhi would easily run into several thousands. The occupants pay at the most Rs 200 or so. The apartments meant for the top bureaucrats in other big cities of India may not have such extensive gardens but their market rental would also bear the same proportion to the ridiculously small amounts the occupants pay. Of course the quarters provided to central civil servants lower down the scale are proportionately more modest, until one reaches the third and fourth class employees who are provided with quarters that seem to have been made to look deliberately ugly, in conformity with the highly ramified hierarchical pattern of the services. All the same, even the accommodation provided to the fourth class employees are luxurious compared to the nightmarish hells that the slums are. Yet, the same amount is provided for these two communities: the slum dwellers and the central government employees! And have the rural poor been forgotten? Not at all! Once again, the treatment is "equal": for all the rural poor without homesteads, who perhaps number about 50 million, Rs 108 crores is earmarked to provide them with "homesteads". "Providing homesteads" does not however mean that anything would be done to provide them with any better structures than they have now. It only means that this much of money would be passed on to the hands of rich farmers so as to provide as a guarantee to a small fraction of the landless families that they would not be evicted from their huts.

The convenient figure of (about) Rs. 100 crores has provided us with a good yardstick for measuring the Government's values. Two other items to which this unit amount of resources has been allocated are Indian Airlines Corporation (Rs. 110 crores) and Tourism (Rs 113 crores). Who travels by IAC? In 1973 the number of IAC passengers was 2.2 lakhs; considering that most air passen-

gers fly several times in the same year, this may represent at the most 50,000 different individuals. It is not known how many of them paid from their pockets, but it cannot be more than 5% of the passengers. The needs of this tiny minority weigh equal in the balance of our socialist planners as the need for better living conditions of 100 million rural poor or of the city slum dwellers. For each such member of the tiny minority the Government proposes to invest Rs 20,000 from public funds. As to tourism, the expenditure is meant to promote the vulgar and indecent consumption habits and behaviour patterns of foreign tourists as well as their domestic imitators, the new rich, those who stay in hotels like Ashoka or Oberoi Intercontinental or loll on the beach of Kovalam. Of course tourism is a matter over which government economists spin a lot of rigmarole about earning of foreign exchange etc. Nobody has as yet done a cost-benefit analysis of tourism even in purely monetary terms: how much money in rupees is spent to earn how many dollars? But even in the social cost benefit analysis as conceived by bourgeois economists for bourgeois economies, there is the provision for taking account of items of "social cost" and "social benefit" which are non-monetised. One knows from the experience of other countries that have gone in for tourism in a big way that it is an industry that inflicts severe damages on a society by introducing into it a rampant commercialism going together with a high degree of vulgarity and indecency. The tourists from affluent countries who come to India are mostly uneducated and uncultured people who nevertheless feel and express contempt for the life and culture of the poor millions of this country. To build luxury hotels to cater to their concept of enjoyment calls for a commercial mentality that is willing to sell one's soul for money. A by-product of this institution of waiting on foreign tourists is the inculcation of their values into sections of the local population. In the name of promotion of tourism any number of places of peace and beauty or of veneration by the masses have been opened up to the ravages of the coca-cola cul-

ture of the foreign and domestic barbarians.

It may be pointed out that our tourist projects are not meant exclusively for foreign tourists but also for the "middle income earning" domestic tourists. But who are these "middle income earners" who can afford to tour? They belong to the top 1% of the population. Providing tourist facilities to them (and reduced fares in trains etc.) is only one aspect of the policy of pampering and isolating the top 1% of the population about which we shall speak more in a subsequent article.

### Education

This same policy is also reflected in the pattern of resources utilisation in education. The Fifth Plan proposes to spend nearly Rs 1,000 crores on school education nearly Rs 350 crores on university education, Rs 164 crores on technical education and nearly Rs. 160 crores on research in science and technology. The outlay on primary education is meant to increase enrolment capacity by 243 lakhs in other words, an allocation of Rs 400 per additional pupil has been made. By contrast, the outlay on university education is meant to increase the number of admissions by 15 lakhs, which means that expenditure has been allowed at the rate of Rs 2200 per additional student. University education is thus more than five times as expensive per student as school education, which is not surprising. What is surprising is that, given the expensive character of university education, the still unfulfilled objective of universal primary education and the state of unemployment among university graduates, one would still persist in expanding capacity in the higher education sector. But much more staggering is the fact that the resources devoted to school and university education and technical education together are below the provisions made for scientific and technological research.

To grudge resource allocation to research may, at first sight, look like a barbarian attitude. One frequently hears the complaint that there are not enough research facilities in the country, with the result that so many of the best

brains are getting drained off to the more affluent countries. One may legitimately ask: how much of research and what kind of research a country of starving millions like ours can afford? Even a country of starving millions should indeed provide facilities to a scientist of the order of S. N. Bose even if he works on problems of pure physics or a mathematician of the order of Ramanujan even if his works on pure mathematics might not bring a single mouthful of food for a starving person. To hold any other view would indeed be barbarian. But among the lakhs of persons who are employed in the hundreds of research laboratories and institutions and centres that have mushroomed all around the country, there are very few who are miles near to being an S. N. Bose or a Ramanujan. They are a class of people who have taken to scientific research not out of any passion for truth or knowledge but simply as a profession. They live, by and large, comfortably and irresponsibly. There is every reason for their work to be assessed in terms of the contribution they make to the welfare of the people at large in the country at whose expense they live their lives of relative ease. And if the interests of the people are to be borne in mind there is no doubt at all that the number of research institutions that have been set up and the number of people who are being maintained to do research bear no proportion to the needs of the country. Thus, despite the setting up of so many research centres for technology and applied sciences, the dependence of the country on imported technology seems to have increased rather than decreased. Economic crisis in the country seems to have deepened in inverse proportion to the number of economic research centres that have been set up. One wonders if there would have been any difference if 90% of the research workers in the country got drained off to other, more affluent, shores. This view may look as being extremist. But can there be any justification for this country allocating Rs. 172 crores to space research! Can Rs. 342 crores worth of research on atomic energy be justified by the successful explosion of some "peaceful nuclear

## Sri Lanka, April 1971

device"? Yet these are the modest amounts allocated to them in the Fifth Plan. It should be recognised that items like space and atomic energy research are being encouraged primarily for reasons of prestige.

There are many other items of investment that are similarly there for reasons of prestige. Such an item is the investment in Air India. It has now become a matter of prestige for every country, even the poorest, to have its own international airlines. A false impression has been created that Air India earns profit for the country. It did so for some years in the narrow accounting sense of surplus in the current account—even that ceased to be true. As a matter of fact, given the competitive nature of the business, Air India has been perpetually engaged in renewing its fleets and improving the services, resulting in its investment being always more than its surplus, meaning that ordinary people have had to pay for the survival and enlargement of the white elephant. Can the country afford such white elephants?

Let us, before finishing with the topic of investment allocations, take a look at the plan expenditures that are meant directly for creating employment opportunities for the unemployed. During the Fourth Plan period a "Crash Scheme for Rural Employment" was taken up with an annual allocation of Rs. 50 crores, "to provide quick and direct employment to at least some specific number in each district". It was found that instead of generating employment, the "bulk of the expenditure, about 80 per cent, was incurred on Communications"! "Communications", one supposes, is a convenient label for expenditure that is unaccounted for. As to the remaining 20% it is well known that much of it has gone into the pockets of the anti-social elements maintained by the ruling party to act as its storm troopers. It is only to this extent that the unemployment problem in the country has been tackled.

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The following is the concluding portion (slightly abridged) of the defence by Rohan Wijesweera, leader of the JVP (Sri Lanka) to the court which is trying him for 'waging war against the Queen of England'.

The... question before you is whether we did rebel during the month of April 1971...

It is necessary to bring to your attention certain specific incidents which occurred in 1971. The Janatha Vimukti Peramuna was implanted in the rural proletariat, the lumpen proletariat and certain petty-bourgeois layers. In the urban working class and the estates the influence of the old left was still paramount. In the rural areas, before our intervention, the traditions of the Sri Lanka Freedom party (SLFP) were strongest. The SLFP won most of its seats in the rural areas. The worst massacres during the April incidents took place in the areas held by the SLFP. The SLFP politicians had shamelessly sown the germs of communal discord against the Tamil minority. In the 1956 elections the CP and the LSSP stood for parity on the language issue. But what did they do a short time later? They were not only against equal status for Tamil and Sinhala, but opposed even the granting of any lesser rights. It was in these conditions that we became disillusioned with them. That is why we struggled. If anyone willingly risks his or her life or is prepared to be shackled as a prisoner, this can only be because there is no alternative.

Chairman, you are aware that after this government came to power, we started our political activities in the open and they were immensely successful. Look back and see the pictures of our public meetings held in various parts of the country such as Kandy, Kegalle, Kurunegala and Southern Province and Colombo—you will see the mass of humanity, thousands and thousands of people, that flocked round us, to see us

and listen to us. And these were not people we had forced or cajoled with the use of guns to attend our rallies, nor had we supplied them with free lorries and buses, but people who had come of their own accord because of their interest in our politics. With every passing day we were moving forward.

This process continued while another parallel process was taking place: dissatisfaction with the UNP resulted, with our blessing, in the election of the United Front government, with over a two-third majority. The LSSP and CP had told the people that if they were brought into power with a two-thirds majority, they would amend the constitution, change the system of internal administration and open the way to socialism. The ordinary people took them at their word. They expected the new government to perform miracles, and that is why they put the cross against the star and the key and not against the elephant.

I have already mentioned that in the early days we were not strong in the urban working class. But by 1971 we had begun to spread out from the villages to the towns and, through our political agitational campaigns, our impact was beginning to be felt in the cities, specifically in certain sections of the working class. Young workers in factories and work sites were beginning to listen. It was then that the old left began to understand the threat of posed to them.

They attempted to devise a course of action to deal with us. The first method was branding us as CIA agents, but you are aware that this attack failed. Then they resorted to the second method. This can best be described in the words of Mr Sarath Muttattuwagama, a leader of the CP. In a speech made at a CP mass rally in Ratnapura during the latter half of 1970, he stated that the repression of the Che Guevarists should not be left to the police. It should be the responsibility of the CP! During the same period the LSSP leaders also discussed the threat we posed. A meeting of their Politbureau issued instructions to their locals to unleash physical

attacks against us. They asked for police protection to carry out this task. I have already mentioned these facts at our public meetings.

When the second method failed, they discussed the matter in the new Cabinet and considered ways and means of suppressing the Janatha Vimukti Peramuna so that it could not become an effective political force. They decided, according to a recent statement by the Prime Minister, not to ban us, as it would have made heroes out of us. The capitalist class is well aware of the futility of banning a Marxist party. So this government suspected that even if they banned us we would carry on political activities under another name. They devised an alternative scheme, which was and continues to be implemented.

You are aware that the country is facing a severe economic crisis. It is something which everyone admits. But the crisis has not materialised out of thin air. It existed on 5 April 1971. It was there before that date. At that time the government was not in a position to add to the distress of the people, to place the economic and social burden they have now placed on the masses with impunity, because there existed a revolutionary force that would have roused the people and led them to protest against these measures. It was necessary to destroy our movement before stern measures could be taken. And accordingly they prepared their plans. After January 1971 things came to a head. Mr S. A. Dissanayake, a former inspector general of police, was appointed additional permanent secretary to the Ministry of Defence and External Affairs with effect from 1 March 1971. Long before this, the CID (Criminal Investigation Department) had been using its full powers to investigate the activities of the JVP. A separate unit had been set up, which had gathered sufficient facts by April 1971 through raids and arrests of comrades from various parts of the country. They also planted agents inside the JVP rank and file.

#### Deployment

By 1 March 1971 arrangements had been completed for the deployment of military units in various parts of the coun-

try to collect intelligence about our activities. Press reports in relation to these manoeuvres appeared between 1 and 5 March. In the same week police powers were vested in officers of the army. On 5 March the police rehearsed a plan in order to find out how much time it would take them when the alarm was sounded. This rehearsal was to test their alertness in an emergency and it was conducted in Colombo as well as in other parts of the island. On the 6th there was an attack on the U.S. Embassy which supplied them with the excuse needed to repress the revolutionary movement. On 13 March I was arrested and on 16 March a state of emergency was declared; 4,098 people were arrested before 5 April 1971.

In April 1971 the revolutionary pre-conditions for the seizure of power by the proletariat and for an armed revolutionary struggle were absent. That is my view. In the absence of a revolutionary situation—i.e. both objective and subjective conditions—an armed uprising was not possible.

My view is that the conditions were not ripe for organising an armed revolutionary uprising to seize state power. The objective conditions were maturing fast, but they were still unripe. It had not reached a stage where the masses saw no other solution but revolution. It is true, however, that then, as now, society was moving in that direction. The subjective conditions were also lacking: that is, the existence of a revolutionary party that has steered itself, won the support of the masses and is fit to lead them in an armed struggle for power. The Janatha Vimukti Peramuna was developing and moving towards that goal, but had not reached full maturity. We had failed at that time to establish the JVP in the Northern and Eastern provinces and in the estate sector as a political force.

And then there was the question of mass support. It is true that out of the millions who voted for the coalition government, tens of thousands had by this time washed their hands of it. It is also true that this section was the politically developed section. They were abandoning the coalition government and moving leftwards towards the JVP. But there

was a section which, although disgusted and frustrated, did not break away from the government during those eight months. In other words the JVP had not yet reached the stage where the masses could see it as a real alternative to the government, accept its leadership and join in the class struggle under its banner. In our Marxist conception, a revolution—an armed uprising—is not something done behind the backs of the masses.

**Justice Fernando:** Have revolutionaries in any part of the world never made mistakes?

**Thirteenth suspect:** Mistakes have been made. In fact they have learnt lessons from these mistakes. Mistakes can happen in the future as well.

**Justice Fernando:** I said a mistake, I meant a miscalculation.

**Thirteenth suspect:** There can be no revolution without the participation and active support of the people. That is our stand.

I told you earlier that I reject the position that it was a JVP decision to seize state power on 5 April 1971. I do not admit that. But as I discovered later, and something I do not deny, is that there have been instances when certain comrades of the JVP, in the face of intolerable repression, resorted to a struggle against such repression.

In March 1971 a class need arose for the ruling class to suppress the revolutionary movements of this country, especially the JVP. They acted accordingly. The April incidents were the result. I interpret the process as one initiated by the counter-revolution.

This does not mean that anyone who acted against capitalist repression on April 5, or had mistaken a decision taken by others to be a JVP decision, or even decided on such a course on their own in the absence of another alternative, was thus a counter-revolutionary. A number of close comrades of mine are no longer living. The entire revolutionary leadership of the Matara district exists no more. Comrade Susil Wickrema, Comrade Jayatissa of Deniyaya, Comrade Piyatassa, Loku Mahatmaya, Suraweera, Jayaweera, the two Bogahawatta brothers, were all both personal friends and fellow comrades. No one can speak about their fate. On inquir-

ing from their homes, all I have learnt is that they are no longer among the living.

For me, Honourable Chairman, the April episode was an occasion when the capitalist class found its existence as a class increasingly threatened by the proletariat. It is a result of counter-revolutionary course of action on which the capitalist class of the country embarked in order to save the capitalist system from the proletariat. It has been part of that course of action to ban the JVP today. A large number of persons connected with the JVP, but belonging to the leftist parties, have been murdered. A large number of persons connected with the JVP have been put in prison, as have been many who had no connection with us. It has become possible to continue the repression of the JVP in particular and revolutionary movement in general.

In conclusion this is what I have to say: I admit that the capitalist class has been temporarily victorious. But I do not see it as a defeat for the proletariat. This is only a big retreat for the proletariat: yes. I call it a big retreat. A retreat is not a defeat, but a phase from which it is possible to recover and march again to certain victory. No revolutionary movement has raced non-stop to victory in a straight line from start to finish. Forward marches followed by retreats are quite common in revolutionary movements. This is the position with which we are confronted today, and it is from this position that I have come to give evidence before you. I have not spoken here by stretching my principles for personal gain. I remain an unrepentant Marxist and what I am defending here are Marxist principles rather than my person. For as a revolutionary Marxist I have nothing else to defend.

#### 'More Buds Will Bloom . . .'

Whatever the capitalist class may have expected to gain through the April incidents, their ultimate result has already been expressed by a revolutionary poet in the following stanza.

See these blossoms stream on earth  
and withered lie.

Their fragrance shall abide, shall  
never die.

To raise its sweetness high to limits  
limitless,

More buds will bloom and bloom and  
multiply.

The poet expresses himself in clear and plain terms. The flowers of revolution have blossomed, but now they lie withered and dead. But their perfume has not ceased. To enhance that perfume

and with that aim in view other buds will continue to bloom. In fact, gentlemen, the capitalist cause has no real reason to celebrate its success. For in the class struggle victory is a seesaw until the proletariat finally emerges victorious. That is our belief. I have concluded my evidence.

## A Government In Exile ?

MEHMOOD HUSSAIN

NOVEMBER 13, 1974, was a landmark in the history of the Palestinian revolution. On that day, Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, made a historic speech in the United Nations. He was not only representing the Palestinian people who have been uprooted and evacuated from their homeland but also the oppressed peoples of the Third World. Arafat was the only leader, who did not represent a government, to address the UN General Assembly. He was in his usual guerilla uniform with a pistol holster and the Kafieh, the traditional Arab head-dress.

In fact Arafat was using the UN platform to address the people of America. He traced the history of Palestine, the Zionist terror through which his people became homeless, the partition of Palestine and subsequent Zionist aggressions. He pointed out that 19,000 Arab houses were destroyed by the Israelis during the past seven years. He demanded nothing less than the full liberation of Palestine where Jews, Muslims and Christians would live in a secular, progressive and democratic State.

"I have come here with an olive branch and the gun of a revolutionary. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand." These were his words.

Israel and the U.S. were totally isolated right from the very beginning when 105 countries supported the UN's invitation of the PLO. After the UN heard the PLO, two resolutions were adopted, one recognising the Palestinians' national right to return to their homeland, and

the other giving the PLO observer status in the UN. The American Zionists (Jewish Defence League) were so frustrated that they attacked the PLO office in New York and threatened Arafat's life.

The Palestinians face enemies on all fronts: Imperialism, Zionism, and Arab reaction. Diplomatically they were able to isolate King Hussein of Jordan, at the Rabat conference. Hussein had no way out but to recognise the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinians.

Thus the Palestinians foiled Dr Kissinger's design to bring about a settlement between Israel and Jordan on the question of the fate of the West Bank. The Arab heads of State gave the PLO the right to decide the future of the West Bank since it is Palestinian territory.

The chances of an independent Palestinian State are brighter than before. They may like to set up a Palestinian Government in exile. This would be a mounting pressure on Israel. The provisional revolutionary government of the Palestinians would get international recognition.

The PLO strategy is, first of all, to intensify the mass uprisings inside Israel which were witnessed before and after Arafat visited the UN. There were several Arab demonstrations in the occupied towns and villages against the Zionist State, in spite of the strictest security measures. Arafat's address to the UN boosted the Palestinian morale in the occupied areas; they quoted parts of his speech to defy the Zionist authority.

DECEMBER 21, 1974



# Thieu's Net Unravelling

JOHN SPRANGENS, JR.

The PLO has been receiving the sympathy of a section of Jews and also of Christians outside of Israel. This sympathy has increased because of the arrest of the Christian Archbishop Capucci of Jerusalem by the Israeli Government for smuggling arms for al-Fatah guerillas. The Israeli Government is censoring the news of mass uprisings.

Guerilla operations have also been intensified. Every Israeli stops twenty times a day from whatever work he is doing to know whether any new guerilla operation has taken place. Guerilla warfare works as psychological warfare against the enemy. The state of hysteria and fear which prevails inside Israel was evident from the statements of Shlomo Hillel, the Israeli Police Minister, after the famous Beisan guerilla operation: "In spite of the losses we have suffered today in Beisan, it has been proved that this (striking at terrorists wherever they are) is the only way to stop 'terrorists' from infiltrating and carrying out operations against us".

The Israeli General Eytan, Commander of the Northern Front, declared that there would be "...no negotiations with the 'terrorists'... Israel should strike them and exterminate them wherever they are."

This hysteria is a manifestation of the fear that has engulfed the Israeli State. Recently, Israel had to devalue its currency by 45 per cent, resulting in a dangerous crisis. There is the growing feeling that the Israelis will have to talk to the PLO. Without that there cannot be any peace. And the intensification of struggle inside the occupied area will help the PLO form their independent revolutionary State in Palestine.

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ALTHOUGH the routines of daily life go on here, the political pot is beginning to boil amidst rumours that President Thieu may be gone by the end of the year. Journalists are attacking government press requirements while Catholic and Buddhist groups are hitting corruption in the Thieu regime. There is growing discontent among middle-level military officers, and students are beginning to stir.

Beginning with the organisation of the "People's Anti-Corruption Movement to Save the Country and Create Peace", launched in June by 301 Catholic priests, organised opposition has become more and more open. On September 8 the anti-corruption movement issued "Indictment No. 1" charging that "the war which now continues to kill our troops and people is caused by the greed of Mr Nguyen Van Thieu, who has considered his own position more important than the fate of the nation".

On September 15 a Buddhist-sponsored National Reconciliation Force made its appearance, and the People's Front Against Starvation was founded on the 22nd, followed by the Committee to Protect the Rights of Workers on the 26th. Meanwhile, the Struggle Committee for Freedom of the Press and Publishing, founded on the 6th, had its first confrontation with the regime when three papers tried to publish "Indictment No. 1" and burned their editions rather than let the police confiscate them.

Forced to respond, Thieu went on television on October 1, using a rambling two-hour speech to pledge an end of corruption. He ended by asking. "If, as the communist propaganda says, the whole army and people have lost confidence in me, please let me know". And people have been letting him know.

Protests mounted in October as journalists took to the streets on October 10 in a demonstration billed as "Journalists' Begging Day". The reporters called attention to unemployment caused by the closing of some papers under heavy gov-

ernment pressure. The government has required large cash deposits from publishers and some papers have lost up to four editions in a week through police confiscation—wiping out profits and forcing printing shops to close.

The "Begging-Day" struck a sympathetic chord among the people, and thousands of ordinary citizens defied police orders and joined in expressing opposition to Thieu. Since then Saigon's "swinging" downtown quarter has a new atmosphere: police patrols have been doubled and coils of concertina wire warn that these streets are no longer the pleasure preserve of the war profiteers and their young.

Within one week two military men—an army sergeant and an airman—appeared on the steps of Saigon's National Assembly building under the protection of opposition deputies. There they held news conferences to describe their disillusion with Thieu. Afterwards, military personnel were restricted to their bases and Military Police armed with M-16s went on permanent duty around the assembly building.

But the police have tried to avoid a bad press in dealing with demonstrations. Although tear gas and clubs have been used in places where there is no foreign coverage, tactics in Saigon have concentrated on keeping "bystanders" away from demonstrators. When the journalists demonstrated, however, this tactic failed as thousands broke through police lines and stayed with the march all morning, helping to overpower the police who blocked the route.

How the police will deal with the new phase is unclear, although they have begun quietly arresting behind-the-scenes organisers. While opposition politicians suggest that Thieu may have to move gently to avoid antagonising the U.S. Congress, others point out that this year's aid decisions have already been made. With Thieu's power at stake, anything can happen.

The directions the mass movements

take, and how much strength they can mobilise, will be of great importance. So will the attitude of the military, especially the mid-levels of the officer corps, and the attitude of the U.S. Government.

### Focal Points

With opposition groups springing up like mushrooms, the two major focal points continue to be the Catholic anti-corruption drive and the Buddhist National Reconciliation Force, which presently cooperate in spite of fundamental differences in political perspective. The People's Movement Against Corruption wants to reform the regime so that the anti-communist struggle can be carried out effectively, while the National Reconciliation Force stresses that peace is the basic issue.

Meanwhile, the students, quiet since their movement was put down in 1970-71, are beginning to stir again. Many took part in the October 10 demonstration, and their youth and enthusiasm are crucial to any popular struggle. At the same time, discontent is fermenting in the military, although few details have yet leaked out to the press.

Many of Thieu's problems have their roots in economic difficulties. Rice production was crippled by American war tactics of massive destruction, and today peasant refugees are not allowed to return to their homes and rice fields unless they are in areas under Saigon's military control. What industry has developed is largely dependent on foreign sources of raw materials and produces luxury goods for the urban elite, while the huge establishment serving U.S. forces has disappeared. The result has been massive unemployment and a 60 per cent annual

inflation rate exacerbated by endemic corruption.

The U.S.-Saigon response has been promises and pipe dreams ("We're going to have oil!") coupled with requests for just a little more aid in the meantime. While Thieu flaunts the Paris Agreements and insists that his is the only legal government in the south, the PRG controls large areas. This, along with corruption and bureaucratic red tape, has discouraged most foreign firms trying to invest in the Saigon economy, and foreign investment was the key to plans for postwar economic reconstruction.

In contrast to Saigon's dependence on outside aid, the PRG has developed a self-sufficient economy in its areas, mechanising agriculture and carrying on outside trade where possible but avoiding dependence on these "extras". As discontent has grown in the Saigon areas, the PRG has increased its pressure, withholding produce from Saigon markets and helping refugees to return home. This last requires guaranteeing safety from Saigon troop attacks and helps to explain the stepped up actions by PRG forces in recent months.

The military attacks have also been motivated by the need to counteract Saigon's continuous incursions on PRG territory. This show of strength, combined with the effects of Nixon's resignation and cuts in U.S. aid appropriations, has encouraged the non-Communist opposition to mobilise against a weakened Thieu.

With the U.S. apparently hoping that an acceptable new leader will emerge, people are beginning to suggest that Thieu may not survive more than a few more weeks or months. The PRG seems likely to support the protest movements, which are more able to bridge the gaps between revolutionaries and uninvolved urbanites than PRG cadre are. A gradual transition would be less painful for all concerned than a direct military takeover.

(New Asia News)

## From The Horse's Mouth

DIPENDU CHAKRABARTI

IT was G. K. Chesterton who, on landing in France, heard a Calais innkeeper complain bitterly that it was hardly worthwhile to have had three revolutions only to end up every time just where one started. Chesterton tried to console him, saying that a revolution, in the true sense of the word, was the movement of an object in motion that described a closed curve, and thus always returned to the point where it had started.

It seems that the present rulers in Russia and other East European socialist States have gone all out to vindicate the Chestertonian definition of a revolution. Even Rumania, notwithstanding her recent policy of equidistance from Russia and China, is probably no exception. This was at least my feeling when Mr Aurel-Drăgăș Muteanu, a Rumanian journalist and novelist, gave a talk at the Calcutta University a few days ago on recent trends in world literature.

He spoke at great length about the modern novelist's attempt to record the angst and the ennui of the individual vis-a-vis a world robbed of its traditional values by science and technology, concentrating particularly on Samuel Beckett's fiction, and extolling his tremendous achievement in terms of art. And that was all he had to say about the recent trends in world fiction. He stopped there without even referring en passant to the other side of world literature—the literature of the socialist countries which, it appeared, were not a part of the 'world' in his own geographical sense of the word.

Incidentally, after his speech he was asked to tell us what he thought of Rumanian literature, and visibly embarrassed, he almost reluctantly touched on the subject. What he said came near to expressing a Chestertonian appreciation of revolution in literary terms.

'We don't believe in socialist realism

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or any kind of method like that, he said, describing himself as an anti-Stalinist 'literature has nothing to do with ideology'. Furthermore, he asserted, the writers in Rumania in spite of tremendous economic progress there, are grappling in their works with the same problems, viz., the disintegration of personality, the anguish of rootlessness, etc. which have become the common stock-in-trade of the writers in the West. He then gave us an example of the disastrous psychological effect of both industrialisation and socialisation—the large-scale slaughter of horses in the countryside when agriculture in Rumania was mechanised. This harrowing incident provoked protests from writers and intellectuals, and scores of poems were written to express their sense of shock and pity for the poor creatures. Mr Muteanu himself sounded soothingly poetic when he talked about the beauty and intelligence of a horse. A horse is such a beautiful and intelligent creature, he exclaimed, that you almost wish to talk to him! And Mr Muteanu talked to us more about the killing of horses, the greatest tragedy of Rumanian socialism, than about the peasant's condition before and after this incident.

However the conclusion that seems almost inescapable from this talk is that socialism cures the evils of capitalism only at the economic level but cannot save man from his spiritual loneliness, a conclusion forcefully put forward by Ernst Fisher in his 'Art Against Ideology'. Mr Muteanu did not of course put it like this, but the implication of his equating the themes of a socialist writer with those of their bourgeois counterparts could not escape any one.

One may not object to his admiration for the 'absurd' literature, for there may be, as Jean-Paul Sartre believes, much in the so-called 'decadent' literature that is likely to help the communists in their struggle at the international level against

capitalism. But the trouble with Muteanu is that he would not judge the relevance of such literature even from a Marxist point of view. That is why he spoke approvingly of Beckett and others without using a single Marxist term. He made it sufficiently clear that he had no use for Marxist sociology. After the famous Kafka debate, the Czech and Polish communists have done all they can for a peaceful co-existence of the decadent bourgeois and the socialist literature. But Mr Muteanu gave the impression that he would have none of that. For him the literature that matters is the literature of Proust, Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Beckett. His own novels, he said, owe a great deal to these writers and one of them, which is being translated into English, deals with the human condition in the same way.

The Russian writers who are now accused of revisionism at least try to be good Marxists in their speeches. Thanks to his honesty and boldness, Mr Muteanu did not hide the skeleton in his cupboard. His anti-Stalinism means outright repudiation of socialist realism banishment of communist ideology from literature, and lamentation over the eternally doomed creature called man. Strangely enough, he expressed his admiration for the Rumanian Governments' achievements and boasted of the freedom enjoyed by writers in his own country. So Rumania is not like Russia and Mr Muteanu need not act like a Solzhenitsyn. Though he did not come here as an official spokesman of his country, he said nothing that would go against the Rumanian Government and he said a lot that cast doubts on the moral superiority of socialism to capitalism. 'Art against ideology, but not against the State' might well be a suitable title for his lecture.

How, then, are we to judge Rumania's attempt to break away from the charmed circle of Russian revisionist politics in foreign affairs and her increasing tolerance for free thinkers like Muteanu? What are we to make of the Rumanian writer's freedom to discard socialism and Rumania's growing friendship with China? Does Rumania aim at a new revision of revisionism? Let those who know Rumania better than Mr Muteanu come forward and provide the answers.

## Overpopulation—The Cause ?

G. N.

OVERPOPULATION explains Indian poverty and misery. If there are more members in the family to feed than the resources available to buy the food, more students for enrolment in schools and colleges than buildings, staff and equipment to accommodate them, more commuters than trains and buses to hold them, more peasants than land to work upon, more labourers than jobs in factories, the all-explaining factor is overpopulation. The affluent would like to wish them away so that they could live in peace; the rulers, not that crass, feel apparently hopeless because the problem seems to be intractable; bureaucrats and contractors are happy because there are more sinecure jobs in the Family Planning portfolio and plenty of money for transfer from the public exchequer to the private coffers.

Let us have a glance at the money we have spent in killing the unborn and later we may try to study whether we could have spent the money in a more rewarding manner. The Indian Association for the Study of Population has published a number of articles, compiled in book form, **Population in India's Development** (Vikas Publishing House, Rs. 60) which provides a number of angles to study the population of India and we shall quote from it extensively to get the picture.

### Money Spent on Family Planning

1951-56	Rs. 1.45 million
1956-61	Rs. 2.56 ..
1961-66	Rs. 248.60 ..
1966-67	Rs. 134.26 ..
1967-68	Rs. 265.23 ..
1968-69	Rs. 305.15 ..
1969-70	Rs. 361.84 ..
1970-71	Rs. 489.04 ..
1971-72	Rs. 617.56 ..
1972-73	Rs. 761.99 ..
1973-74	Rs. 534.50 ..
	(estimated)
1974-79	Rs. 51-60 million (projected outlay)

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DECEMBER 21, 1974

The Central Government has from 1957 to 1973 spent Rs. 318.8 million to reduce the population growth. What has it achieved by spending this substantial sum? The most optimistic estimate is that as a result of the programme 14.7 million births have been arrested by September, 1973. The following table will give a comparative idea year-wise.

Year	Birth rate (per 1000)	Growth rate (per cent)	Population (in million)
1961	41.7	1.89	439
1966	41.1	2.19	489
1970	39.0	2.04	535
1971	38.1	2.04	547
1972	37.3	2.05	559
1973	36.4	2.05	570

The Family Planning programme in the Fifth Plan aims at reducing the birth rate to 30 per thousand, the growth rate to 1.70 per cent and keeping the population at 637 million in 1979. By 1984, the desired figures are 25 per thousand, 1.4 per cent and 686 million.

At first sight, the population growth in India as well as in the world seems alarming indeed—we are terrified at the vision of a world swarming with myriads of people frantically researching for food, clothes and shelter. But the situation may not be that awesome, if we keep in mind the steady development of technology or, to put it in the other way, steady decline of man's sense of helplessness because of his power to overcome ignorance. Let us keep in mind that the vast world is still today largely unpeopled and three-fourths of the world—oceans—are yet unexplored. And that takes us back to the natural resources position in India. By all accounts, our attempts and therefore successes to explore natural resources have been so far ridiculously meagre or nil. Even the most panicky of Indians would not say that the natural resources of the country—minerals, soils, water, fuels, building materials, forests—are nearing depletion or going to deplete or going to deplete within the next century at today's rate of consumption. In fact, we in our country do not know yet the precise resources situation—not to speak of the interaction between the

resources and today's or tomorrow's technology. For example the I.A.S.P. study, mentioned above and so full of facts and figures, refers to the resources exploited so far and gives no indication about the projection figures of resources exploration.

Therefore, it seems that all the people exercised over population growth are either frightened because they are ignorant or use population growth as an alibi. That the latter is more plausible a hypothesis becomes apparent if we remember that the annual population growth of 2.2 in our country should have been offset by the annual national income growth of 3 to 4 per cent. But as we know, poverty in our country has increased over the years steadily and will do so in the foreseeable years. Let us take one example to put the record straight—foodgrains production, with 100 as the base in 1961-62.

#### Food Production

The index number was then 95 in 1959-60, 90 in 1965-66, 117 in 1967-68, 134 in 1970-71, 132 in 1971-72, 119 in 1972-73, and 133 in 1973-74. The increase in the food production has been substantially more than the population growth. This, in spite of the famously antique methods of farming. But who has profited by the increase?

The increase has been confined to cereals. The output of pulses, which are the primary sources of protein of the poor, has shown a downward trend. The index number of the production of pulses was 98 in 1970-71 as against 139 of cereals, 79 in 1972-73 against 119 of cereals. In the cereal group again wheat showed a spurt, rice less, and the inferior cereals lesser. Wheat production increased faster than population, rice at par, inferior cereals below. The story is the same in the matter of price. The wholesale price index of wheat stood at 150, of rice 153, of pulses 180 in 1965-66. These three indices rose to 232, 244 and 353 in 1972-73. In the bargain the poor have been hit the hardest on both counts, production-wise and price-wise. The natural conclusion is therefore that the poor have become poorer not because of their breeding like anything, but because of the Govern-

ment's vicious planning of production and prices.

The story will be told all over if we take any other item on the subject. This is not to say that we can merrily go on producing children with no thought for the morrow; this is just to say that we do not have yet the wherewithals to blame the misery all on over-population. Given a steady economic growth, pressures develop to limit the family size. Let us plan our family — but let us plan first our economic development a bit more rationally.

## Society Of Working Artists

SANDIP SARKAR

A group which calls itself the Society of Working Artists, West Bengal, held its 9th exhibition of paintings and sculptures at the Birla Academy, 10-22 December, and never has a group exhibited so much tripe. Never. The atmosphere stank of rotting garbage. The sculptures were real horrors, particularly those of Arun Mukherjee.

So were the paintings of Subir Sen and Animesh Sen. Subir Sen did book covers on large canvases while Animesh Sen exhibited trash. Sukumar Das had Muslim architecture, a veiled woman, with real jewellery stones inserted with glue into her hand. It was nauseous.

However, there were two young painters who showed some promise—Manab Barua and W. R. Kapoor. Barua does not dare very much. He mixes Rabin Mondal's primitive naivete with Ganesh Pyne's fantasy and Madhu Parek's folk stylisation, uses impasto, distorts and does so many things, but he is so calculating and design-oriented that he does not achieve much. Kapoor has a certain amount of skill but his paintings are an imitation of Bikash Bhattacharya's. His plump, well-fed women, done realistically for surrealist effect, lack intensity.

Salil Bhattacharya is the only mature artist in the group. He has taken over

the methods of the cubists with a vengeance and knows how to use paints. In his paintings the main focal point is in the middle where he has worked very hard. Often he has not been able to balance form with the background. His construction is never weak but is not synchronised with outer space. Even then one can feel the power of his vision.

## Two Plays

BY A DRAMA CRITIC

THERE seems to be a spate of plays in Bengali based on Brecht's *The Good Person of Szechuan*, and recently Balaka staged two short plays *Bhalomanusher Gappo* and *Charitrer Bidroho* at the Mukta Angan. Balaka's simplified version of *The Good Person of Szechuan* found an echo in *Bhalomanusher Gappo* which showed how difficult it is for any basically good and honest person to survive in a world bristling with spongers, snipers, sharks and swindlers. All these types are given adequate representation in the play which drives home the moot point quite successfully.

As far as the play itself is concerned, the director, Rajen Das, would be well advised however to tighten up the structure and the main body of the play. Loud prompting from the wings all through the play indicated a hurriedly got up and ill-rehearsed performance. Some of the actors muffed their lines as well. Prasanta Das, as Abhimannu, the good person, showed promise and was perhaps the only one who seemed at ease.

All the Brechtian trappings like masks, songs and placards were introduced with good effect. This was a condensed and compact story with the message coming through very clearly.

*Charitrer Bidroho* on the other hand was a sort of play within a play where the director is unable to make the actors repeat his lines and conform to their respective roles. They develop a life and momentum of their own and give vent to their outraged feelings prompt-

ed by the relentless pressure of adverse circumstances. Beginning with the kind of middle class vacillation which is so much a part of our humdrum lives, the actors rebel against this mental sterility and gradually graduate to a state of heightened consciousness. In the end the victims of oppression turn on the oppressors with savage fury. What was originally meant to be a sex-thriller becomes in the end a miniscule revolution against the director's conscious attempts to lay down the law regarding the sex content of the play.

Biren Nath as the young man on crutches kept up the intensity of a fast-developing explosive situation, and H.M.V. as the militant factory worker comes out convincingly with a Marxian analysis of the current economic situation. On the whole it was a play devoid of any brilliant flashes but in a quiet, respectable sort of way it left a simple message to be recollected in moments of tranquillity.

## Letters

### U.S., USSR, China

Ajitha Narayanan has raised several interesting questions of philosophy in her contribution "On Unification" (Frontier, October 5, 1974). In the spirit of her wish for open and frank criticism. I would like to examine a few of them.

The first concerns her linking up of the USSR and the U.S., and her implicit assertion that there is no objective difference between "U.S. imperialism" and "Soviet social-imperialism".

In my view, there are major differences between these two, the most important being that the U.S. follows the policy of buttressing the top elements of society viz. the most reactionary classes, whereas the USSR follows a strategy of strengthening the intermediate elements.

The U.S. polity has itself come under the control of the most reactionary elements within that society, so it is only natural that they support their cousins elsewhere. The Soviets, on the other hand, believe that while a thoroughgoing proletarian revolution is unlikely in most countries, it is possible to aid

in the creation of situations whereby the top crust of a society can be overthrown and replaced by the intermediate classes.

The Soviet policy in India, for example, closely followed this logic. While the United States followed a policy of encouraging the expansion of private monopolies, and aided the consolidation of the economic power of the landlord-kulak elements in the countryside, the USSR encouraged the growth of a public sector that was visualized as a 'middle-class' response to top capitalist power.

Objectively, there are significant differences between the intermediate and top classes. These differences get blurred only in the deadly amalgam known as fascism. It is the duty of all elements of the Left to intensify the contradictions between the intermediate and the top classes, and work for the overthrow of the latter with the help of the former. In this task, while they will be opposed fiercely by the U.S., they obtain the assistance of the USSR.

Secondly, Ajitha makes a distinction between feudalism and imperialism, and depicts the second as the principal contradiction. This assumes the two to be independent of each other, whereas in fact they are tightly linked. Imperialism reveals itself in the socially backward areas as feudalism and monopoly capitalism.

The feudal-landlord elements in the countryside and the monopoly capitalist elements in the cities have become comprador in the classical sense, and therefore an attack on imperialism cannot take place except through an attack on the feudal-landlord elements and the monopoly capitalists. Again, success in such an operation is possible only through the formation of a broad democratic coalition of all classes outside these two ultra-reactionary groups.

References are made to a "ruling clique" which was regarded as the slave of the U.S. till 1971 but which is now held as the slave of the USSR. Such an approach may be emotionally very satisfying, but it is not scientifically correct. In the first place, what is meant by "the ruling clique"? Is it a political party? A class? A group of indivi-

duals? In my view there is no "ruling clique" but several cliques, each having largely autonomous control over one or the other segment of social or political life. Not all these cliques need be fought. Some may, indeed, be rendered helpful in an objective sense, at one or the other phase of the struggle.

There are, therefore, numerous cliques, including cliques that are the stooges of one or the other foreign power. To say that India is under the control of one particular clique is to presuppose a degree of centralisation and effective administrative power that verges on the absurd.

The fourth set of issues raised by Ajitha concerns China. In my view, we need to shed the belief that outside people know more than we do about our own conditions, and so we must take their advice.

Events of the past few years have shown that China's major preoccupation is with its own security. The belief that it is facing a deep threat from all sides has become deeply embedded in the Chinese consciousness, and has sharply affected its policy towards the outside world. Like any other country, it too has become interested in building up lobbies in various countries, without bothering about the social composition of these lobbies. Pakistan and Ceylon are examples. And the correct strategy for preserving internal security can often diverge from that needed to fuel revolutionary wars.

Ceylon, particularly, should have dispelled the view that the Chinese are interested in "national liberation" struggles outside. The speedy despatch of arms and ammunition (??—Frontier's query) to the Bandaranaike government to put down the JVP insurrection shows China's commitment to the 'status quo'. Even the much-maligned Indian Government did not do anything more than despatch four helicopters for transport of civil servants from Kandy to Colombo, and intensify naval patrolling off Ceylon. No arms were sent by India.

The China-fixation, therefore, is likely to distort strategy in unrealistic directions, and will blur consideration of

the unique features of the Indian situation.

The formation of a broad democratic coalition to crush the fascist tide now threatening to sweep over the whole country is the primary task of the left. It is good to know that the active cadres of the C P I (ML) are going through a re-examination of their strategy and tactics. Hopefully the outcome of this will be the more purposeful entry of the C P I (ML) cadres into the broad anti-fascist democratic coalition being developed in India.

M. D. Nalapat  
Trivandam

### Lin Piao Affair

Picking up a quarrel with the CPC, for what? Is it for the benefit of Russia? Is it for the benefit of the USA? Is it for the benefit of Indian capitalists? Of course I know you do not mean all these. What is required utmost at present is revolutionary unity at the national and international level. Mao had to purge many of his comrades because of their unscientific views and lack of capacity to correct their mistakes when pointed out. Mao, unlike Stalin, never has physically liquidated any of his close comrades-in-arms. I think you will not consider Lin Piao greater than Chu Teh in the history of the Chinese Revolution. But Chu Teh was not given any important assignment after liberation though this never affected the mutual lifelong friendship between him and Mao.

Mao has always been anxious to keep the army under the party's control. When Lin Piao began to behave like a warlord of yester years he had to be thrown out from the party. This is what happened in China. It is said that in his mad subjective frenzy he had plotted to kill Mao.

To attack Mao through Chou En-lai is bourgeois tactics. As for the article "CPC owes an Explanation" (16-11-'74) it sounds as if Chou En-lai, the revisionist, has imprisoned Mao and usurped the leadership of the CPC. The Tenth Congress of the CPC was held while Mao was there and we have to presume

that it got his approval. If the Lin Piao admirers think that Mao is already incapacitated by the revisionists headed by Chou En-lai, they should declare it publicly. What they forget is that in the long history of the Chinese Communists Mao has always fought against rightists and leftists alike.

M. N. D. Nair  
Trivandrum

### To Die ?

Comrades Kista Goud and Bhoomiah, Naxalites, are under the death sentence which has not been commuted by the Central Government. We request all State Committees of civil liberties to agitate for them. We want the addresses of such committees to get in touch with them. The Central Government suspended all the death sentences passed before the jubilee celebrations. But though the sentences on Goud and Bhoomiah were passed before that occasion these have not been cancelled.

P. Venkateswarulu  
General Secretary  
A. P. Civil Liberties Committee  
4-7-785, Esamia Bazar  
Hyderabad 500027  
Andhra Pradesh.

### Angolan Agony

Reader (November 30) in his ill-informed criticism of "The Angolan Agony" (October 5), wants us to gloss over our weaknesses. Instead of our overcoming them he would have us go down, impervious to the realities. If Mr I. K. Shukla on the testimony of a great pan-African says something about a so-called leader, it does not become slander just because it is unpalatable or unknown to the Reader. We in Africa know what impact on any liberation movement the quality of leadership has.

As an African activist I know what I am talking. My readings from the Portuguese and French journals lead me to the same conclusions and opinions as those of Mr Shukla.

An Angolan  
(Resident in India as student)  
Delhi

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