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WHO DID IT ?

PARLIAMENT will miss Mr Lalit Narayan Mishra who was the target of the opposition during the last session and whom the opposition would have gunned for again had he not died as a result of the bomb blast at Samastipur, after a delayed but longish operation. Who planted the grenade? Congressmen and the CPI are not blaming the opposition parties which had harassed Mr Mishra, for despite the hostile criticism, most of the party leaders were on good terms with him. In the opinion of some people, it might be some disgruntled railwaymen who were behind it all. True, railwaymen had reason to dislike Mr Mishra; in May last year the Government unleashed repression and terror on a scale seldom seen before on them. Thousands were suspended or sacked and—a move criticised even by the then President, Mr Giri—payment of pre-strike period wages was stopped. The raids on the railway colonies, the mass arrests, evictions from quarters—all these were unlikely to endear the Government to the workers, and Mr Mishra, as the Railway Minister, was not considered a 'likeable, warm-hearted and generous man' as his critics in Parliament are now saying. But the way the Samastipur outrage took place speaks of organisation; it was not that a grenade was thrown and the bomber ran away. It was the work of a group which found it very easy to defy the most elaborate police and para-military precautions.

It is asinine on the part of some Congressmen and Mr Dange to blame it on J. P. Narayan and his movement. It is to prevent mass discontent from taking a violent turn that J.P. is conducting his movement—it has already been put on the electoral track. Maybe the Congressmen and the CPI will lose a number of seats—but that is not a big danger to the total system. The Government knows that.

When the Prime Minister heard of the attempt on the life of Mr Jyoti Bose, the CPM leader, in Patna a few years ago, her first private reaction was: "It must be the work of his own people." That exactly was the instant reaction in certain quarters in Calcutta to Mishra's death. Mr Mishra had become a very hot potato and more stormy days in Parliament were ahead in which others would have been exposed; but as a big fund-raiser he knew far too many secrets to part company with, without acrimony. The recent spate of deaths of key CBI officials in car accidents has also made people very suspicious and prone to believe almost anything—that the Samastipur outrage was a RAW deal. This is unfair, but the rulers must know the extent of disbelief in their actions and professions of politics without violence.

The demand for an authentic enquiry is full-throated, but in such cases the truth seldom comes out. However, after Samastipur ministers will hesitate to go on a foundation-stone-laying spree before elections.

More Of The Same

No one knows who was responsible for the grenade explosion; but naturally, one has ideas. No sensible person would for a moment doubt that it was an outrage or that individual assassination is a dangerous form of politics which fails to serve any constructive purpose. But constructive or not, such killings always have definite purposes behind them.

One has to admit that the late Mr Mishra was one of the best-hated figures even among Indian reactionary politicians. The Government's prolonged refusal to divulge the CBI report on the import licences scandal in which Mr Mishra was thought to have been deeply involved turned suspicion for most people into dead certainty. And the resultant hatred towards him was, ironically enough, most intense and widespread in his own province where he met his doom. The idea therefore could not be initially ruled out that he might have been killed by some big or small group of his own suffering compatriots who fanatically hated what they thought to be his anti-people politics. (The thousands upon thousands of deaths due to starvation and exposure to cold might well have mortally sharpened their hatred of their self-styled socialist leader whose opulence was inversely proportional to their own misery). But such a solution of the mystery would imply the assassins' deep and elaborate collaboration with the administrative and security forces, which is hardly likely.

What is the explanation then? Well, the vital question is, who gains ultimately, strategically, from this extraordinarily demonstrative killing of Mr Mishra, the gruesomeness of which was, as it were, flaunted before our eyes? Plainly, not the J. P. Narayan political group. For, in the first place, the J.P. group is trying hard to build up a benign democratic image of itself calculated

to sweep the polls and oust the "fascist" Indira group from power. Secondly, J.P., who represents the anti-Soviet pro-American group of the Indian comprador bourgeoisie, is anxious to prevent revolutionary violence with his purely reformatory non-violent agitation. This open bomb-blasting of Mr Mishra, if it can be even remotely attributed to the J.P. faction, can only tarnish its image and severely damage its poll prospects.

Suspicion therefore turns another way -- and that is the way public opinion seems to be drifting. The circumstances of the murder—the perfect use of a grenade under a massive guarded ministerial dais—would suggest to many a deep-laid inner conspiracy, an arrangement within the official order. Killing two birds with one stone has already been suggested as the motive; to prevent over-exposure by getting rid of the over-infected member of the flock and at the same time to blacken the image of the menacingly advancing rival. The over-prompt and over-explicit tone of political accusation from Moscow has been felt by many to be a bit too clever.

But is such a thing really possible? Well, as we have said, no one knows. But questions are question-begging. Besides gunning down hundreds of free Indian citizens in processions, demonstrations, meetings, public roads and private homes, who has been arranging the secret killing, maiming and branding of thousands of political prisoners in police custody and in jails? Who has substituted justice by judicial trial by justice by secret and summary violence and turned total ruthlessness into an unwritten law of administration? It is these unhappy and confusing questions that have led to the wide speculation that the assassination of Mr Mishra might have been staged for perpetuating Mr Mishra's politics. With this goes the further speculation that the sovereign guidance for many strange things, these days might be coming from "some other" foreign spy organisation which has been increasingly taking over the sundry modes of melodramatic violence which the CIA is increasingly discarding as too patently dirty and therefore obsolete.

The Middle East

The Middle East situation continues to be uncertain. No pre-emptive Israeli strike came off during the Christmas holidays; Israeli action is now confined to raids on Lebanon villages wherefrom they suspect Arab guerillas are operating. The raids are swift and ruthless, but outsiders do not care. The big question is whether there will be another general flare-up this year.

Syria is prepared even if a surprise attack goes on for over 21 days, the period for which the U.S. is said to have furnished enough arms to Israel, including T.V. guided missiles and all that. President Sadat is riding high, but he is not very sure of the saddle. The Russians, annoyed by his flamboyant flirtations with the U.S., are not eager to boost the Egyptian army. The army will not be as effective as it was in 1973, a state for which Sadat cannot escape his responsibility. His pro-American stand is much too pronounced for the Kremlin to be warm-hearted and generous. He has made it clear that he will not let in Russian experts again along with the latest Russian equipment. King Faisal who aids Egypt on a big scale, may suspend assistance if the Russians get in again. Mr Brezhnev, who is not keeping well, has postponed his visit to Cairo.

There is inspired speculation in Israel and elsewhere that since time is running out for Tel-Aviv, they will strike before the Egyptians are hundred per cent ready for battle. The prospects of Geneva are bleak; Israel will not sit with the PLO; and the Arab States will not ditch the PLO to oblige Israel now that the U.N. has given the PLO observer status. Jordan, on the face of it, has also decided to give the PLO a rather long rope.

The situation is indeed uncertain and dangerous. It goes without saying that war or peace in the Middle East depends to a large extent on the two super-powers. At the moment the Russians are, or seem to be, angry over the clause in the U.S. trade Bill which seeks to ease Jewish emigration from Russia. Let's wait and see the outcome of this, perhaps, diplomatic anger.

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Tensions Rising

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

THE emergence of 'Upajati Juba Samiti' on the political scene has further complicated the already intricate political process in which the politicians in Tripura specialise. UJS has surfaced as a sophisticated version of the tribal body politics of yester years which had always created more problems for the ruling classes than solve any. Modelled after the concept of APHLC in Meghalaya, it is a conglomerate of ruling Congress, CPI and certain CPM elements and is being taken care of by the foreign missionaries and certain other notorious agencies of the Government of India. One CPI member of the Rajya Sabha recently elected from this State is to all intents and purposes acting as chief of this new organisation. Over a relatively short period it has grown into a powerful political body representing some powerful clans. Not surprisingly, the Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland Chief Ministers have recently hailed the birth of UJS as the only viable alternative for the tribals and have urged the Centre to look into its demands in right earnest.

Since its inception UJS has made its presence felt chiefly by its communal utterances, occasionally made in a frightful manner. Immediate introduction of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution in the form of tribal reserve area, recognition of Kokborak (Tripuri language) as official language, adoption of Roman as its script instead of Bengali so far used, return of all tribal land transferred after 1960—these are the demands around which UJS is vigorously trying to unite the tribal people. It claims to be independent of both the ruling Congress and the Communists though, in reality, it has never made any secret of its hatred for the communists. For all the miseries of the people it holds the non-tribals responsible. It has recently asked all the tribal MLAs (they constitute a sizable

number belonging to both the CPM and the ruling Congress) to resign immediately as a mark of protest against the Government's unhelpful attitude to their demands.

To see this business in perspective one has to go back. The tribal people have always looked upon the Congress with suspicion though there has never been any dearth of eligible tribal leaders to patronise the party. What is today known as the Indian National Congress was formed in this State by people without any root here. It had always looked to the support of the non-tribals for its sustenance. It was not long ago when to the unsuspecting refugees from East Pakistan the Congress was synonymous with the symbol of Hindusthan and the latter also on its part had taken full advantage of the situation. Nevertheless, Congressmen had never been lacking in devious expedients to make their penetration among the tribals easier. What happened later is too well known to need any repetition.

On the other hand, the Communists—most of them belong to the CPM today—have always had among them a good tribal following which had fought many a battle hand in hand with their non-tribal comrades, not only against the tyrannical princely rulers but also against the equally oppressive non-tribal collaborators. During those days a tribal youth could hardly be imagined without a red cap on. But this situation changed considerably with the heavy exodus of refugees since 1947. Soon, with their headlong plunge into electoral politics, the communists could not for long afford to ignore this new aspect and started employing methods to enlist the support of the non-tribals, which are qualitatively not any different from those of the Congress. With the ever-growing representation of the non-tribals in the Communist Party the leadership too had passed in-

to the hands of the non-tribals giving rise to the suspicion that the leadership is buying support of the non-tribals at the cost of the tribals. The arch reactionary tribal and non-tribal circles, which have to their credit an ignominious record of collaboration with the princely rulers in oppressing the tribal people both economically and culturally, now find it easier to create an impression that as a political force the CPM has lost all credibility insofar as the problems of the tribal people are concerned.

Viewed in this background the emergence of UJS on the scene may have appeared quite logical to a section of the tribal people inasmuch as it is composed of purely tribal elements. What is more interesting is that UJS has also started voicing the same demands the CPM has been voicing for the last two decades. While preparing the grounds for formation of a body like UJS the ruling Congress has also carefully seen to it that as a counterpoise there is also a similar body purporting to look after the interests of the non-tribals. In this task the ruling Congress has engaged some old Congressmen, kept away from the seat of power, who have recently declared the formation of a body styled as Tripura Janakalyan Samiti. According to TJS, its efforts would be to safeguard the interests of the non-tribals in all circumstances.

Clashes

In the meantime, a number of clashes have taken place in the areas mainly inhabited by the tribals resulting in looting of foodgrains belonging to the non-tribal peasantry. While UJS has instructed all its units to prepare for forcible harvesting of the next crop belonging to the non-tribals, some non-tribal State Congress leaders, including the Chief Minister himself, and TJS functionaries have been going about telling the non-tribal peasantry that if necessary the latter would be given arms to protect their crops. Needless to say, all this is an open call to communal violence. What seems to have unnerved the ruling Congress and TJS most is the incident at Jampuijala, an interior village in north Tripura, in which one notorious non-tribal jotedar

was killed by the tribal people. The people in that locality had long been nursing serious grievances against the jotedar who had always passed himself off as one who could do all the mischief on earth. As a matter of fact, sporadic outbursts of anger led to his killing when he abducted three tribal girls for the gratification of his lust during the last Durga puja. This incident has provided the self-styled messiahs espousing the cause of the non-tribals a splendid excuse to further foment the tension already created by some double-crossing rich tribal leaders. What intrigues people most in this context is that UJS has nothing to say against the tribal exploiters, that it has turned the tribal people's genuine grievances into hatred of the non-tribals. And to their great delight the ruling cliques have now found this an issue—a most convenient one at that—to keep harping on when people's miseries know no bounds.

Curiously enough, the ruling cliques are not blaming UJS or TJS for the incidents at Jampuijala and elsewhere but blaming it all sometimes on the CPM and sometimes on the 'collusion' between the tribals and the extremists on the one hand and the Mizo rebels on the other, whichever suits them best. Their latest revelation is that the Mizos, Pakistan agents, extremists and the Chinese have all entered into a conspiracy to create chaos in this State by spreading communal conflict among the people.

Being what they are these developments have no doubt landed the CPM in an uncomfortable situation. When the CPM in a statement accused the ruling Congress of spreading communal tension (which is not untrue) and also suspected indirect involvement of Mizo rebels behind the incidents, it reflected more a sense of frustration and its own failures than an understanding of the existing problems which are providing ready material for communal propaganda. It has always sought to utilise people's grievances up to a given extent for immediate gains. When the people at Raimasharma were forcibly evicted from their lands by the police and the CRP, one of the most serious incidents in recent times (see

Frontier, February 23, 1974), the CPM did no more than condemn the incident and voice certain demands. Even when in the face of mounting repression the victims were left with no alternative but to resist it in every possible way, the CPM's efforts were to restrain them. The CPM even went one better to help the Government put down the resistance when a large number of the victims refused to give in. Not surprisingly, the CPM leaders have also condemned the incident at Jampuijala almost in the same vein as the ruling Congress.

The rulers of our friendly neighbour on the other side of the border are also passing through very uneasy times

trying to beleaguer their disillusioned masses. A section of the local press on this side is carrying news almost every day about 'Mizo depredations' carried out in company with the extremists from across the border. Occasionally the Chinese are also brought in to embellish their crass theme. Above all, quite a few communal incidents have taken place in Tripura to disturb the secular minds of the ruling classes. So the chances are that like Nagaland and Mizoram, Tripura is also going to be declared a 'disturbed area' as part of the Government's grand strategy.

Manipur

Portents And Prospects

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

"... Our characters are made by our surroundings, and in Manipur the surroundings are not of an elevating nature.

For my part I say emphatically, let us beware, we have not heard the last of Manipur."

—Sir James Johnstone in "My Experiences in Manipur and the Naga Hills".

THE drift to disruption in Manipur has been initiated and it is difficult to arrest it now. Oddly, New Delhi and Congress have pioneered the operation. That brigandage assumed the role of a frontier policy and democratic polity in a strategically sensitive State like Manipur will come as a rueful recognition even to New Delhi, the guilty party, only when it will have been too late. Alas.

This from a personal letter: "Much water has flown down the river Imphal since I wrote to you last. The most nefarious happening in this interregnum is the ouster of Mr Shaiza. His rule as CM was remarkable in many ways. It was the most peaceful and trouble-free. At no other time had a greater sense of security prevailed. Agitations

had become rare. Mayangs (outsiders/linguistic minorities) had started thinking that their days of tribulation were over. Not a single day did anyone come forcibly to collect so-called subscriptions. Clean-up operation in the administration was really under way. Suspensions and transfers had started materialising. Corruption, the satanic bane here, had almost stopped. The common man had started hoping for a bright future. All this when Mr Shaiza had not as yet been allowed to settle down to brass tacks. That Congress could be so devoid of political morality, that it could be so hungry for power, so blind to its future, and so careless of the good of the country I had never thought of."

It is a fair summing up of the situation. For one thing it is significant in that it disapproves the Manipuri myth that the linguistic minorities are always for the Congress. That the outsiders can judge a party by its performance and not from parochial or personal predilections is well borne out here, this being a barometer of the Congress standing among the outsiders. This objectivity, detachment, and rational scrutiny is something concep-

tually beyond the local patriots of a vintage ancestry.

How permissive politics in Manipur can be is clear from only one example. Its revenue, size, population are extremely small. Yet the coalition Government in saddle has had no qualms in making every third MLA a Minister. A crude device to pre-empt defection, it will inflate the administrative overheads unduly, and what is worse, it will burst open the sluice gates of corruption a horrid scale, pauperising the masses in consequence. For nobody joins a Congress Ministry to serve the people, least in Manipur. This style of the new Government will be the sanction for pervasive corruption in the State, which phenomenon none will escape, none will miss.

If pandering to jingoist passions is among the functions of New Delhi then it deserves full marks in the case of Manipur. Not only has it thus helped the State remain benighted, it has also paved well the way for territorial disintegration by rewarding disruptionist subversion and penalising efforts at national cohesion and solidarity. The following will bear this out.

By the maladroit manipulation that the Congress adopted to dislodge the Shaiza Ministry in concert with a party avowedly chauvinistic, the signal has been given for the eventual splintering of the State. It is New Delhi which will be squarely responsible for the developments hereafter. Manipuri Nagas know now that they earned the disapproval of New Delhi because they refused to be a party to corruption, bribery, and philandering in politics. They still hold some other virtues dearer than money. Understandably, this piqued the Congress mafia.

The Nagas now feel convinced that their destiny cannot be entrusted to Meiteis (valley Manipuris), or the Congress (New Delhi). The District Councils (Hill Areas) were not a roaring success in Khasi-Garo-Jaintia Hills, and the tribals carved out Meghalaya as a separate State from Assam. Thanks to political exigencies there was no blood split over it. In Manipur the six District Councils have proved worse than useless, except in government records. The Nagas per-

severed with it for far too long, they will realise, alas, to no purpose.

It is quite on the cards that they are going to boycott the State Assembly, subsequent elections, educational and other institutions of the Government of Manipur. It seems that they will mount an agitation for a separate State and a separate assembly of their own. If their overtures to Nagaland for integration bear fruit theirs will be a larger political and administrative entity. If for some reason Nagaland winces and waives them away, they will go for the second best—a separate State of tribal areas in Manipur. However seditious it may sound at the moment, it has more logic than the Andhra demand for a split up. Even in this set of options the tribals and Christians would appear to be better patriots than the valley Hindus or New Delhi bourbons.

A prolonged struggle, long preparations, and granite determination will be

called for. Nagas and Kukis are not deficient in these manly qualities. This will be yet another proof of how a just and small claim rejected grows into a challenge and reaches a point of no return from its own dynamics. When the tribals achieve their aim, neither very rosy nor very easy, they would be magnanimous enough to apportion credit where it is due. Objectively speaking they will be pleasantly surprised to see that the Congress and Meiteis, helped crystallise their aim and prodded them into achieving it with a sense of urgency and a lot of religious fervour.

And to baulk at it in feigned horror will ill become New Delhi, and ill serve the nation. Minorities on the periphery are kept contented by the heartland administration, and not only in communist China. Let New Delhi shed its ostrich stance while there is yet time. Or, the ominous prophecy of Johnstone quoted in the beginning will fulfil itself.

Naxalite Politics In Punjab

AN OBSERVER

EVEN before the event of Naxalbari took place, antagonisms were smouldering within the Punjab CP(M) unit between the militant cadres and the leadership on many crucial questions. Owing to a rickety organisational structure the unit had only a superficial influence on the people and had no real powerful mass base among the basic classes.

Immediately after Naxalbari a process of rift and division started in the Punjab CP(M) unit, resulting in the expulsion of Maoist-oriented cadres, who later on formed a co-ordination committee at the State level. But soon serious differences arose between them on many important questions, the line of annihilation being the central one. From the very beginning the Bhatinda District Committee of Revolutionaries adamantly opposed the line of individual annihilation and differed on many other issues such as uneven development of revolutionary struggles, economic struggles, origin and development of people's

war, leadership of the working classes, formation of the CP(ML) and above all on the issue of mass organisations. Despite the flood of humiliating phrases such as renegades, traitors, people's enemies, revisionists, etc., etc. they stuck to their guns, in isolation, without being awayed along the powerful current of revolutionary terrorism. After a time the Punjab unit of the CP(ML) was confronted with internal bickerings, mutual disbelief and allegations which further split the unit into two groups, called itself 'Punjab-Himachal Committee of CP(ML)' and started its own monthly paper **Lok Yudh** as its political-ideological organ. Both groups had similar politics, but one attributed the recognition of the other by the central leadership to political manoeuvring and sectarianism. After the fizzling out of the first phase of terrorism, rift and division at the central level, the Punjab-Himachal Committee joined hands with the Satya Narain Sinha group, while many of its members defected to the Bhatinda District Committee of Re-

revolutionaries which had separated from the CP(ML) in February 1970 and had been working independently. Now there are three different groups of communist revolutionaries in Punjab, the original CP(ML), the SNS group and the Punjab Communist Revolutionary Committee (PCRC) which was originally the Bhatinda District Committee.

As laid down by Charu Mazumdar in **Liberation**, the line of individual annihilation was the only form of struggle to rouse the masses while all other struggles were branded sheer economism. The formation and development of militant mass movements was declared outmoded and guerilla activities by secret squads were specially emphasised. At a later stage it was declared that annihilations of class-enemies should be carried out, only with conventional weapons in order to release the initiative of the oppressed peasantry. Thus a series of annihilations was carried out by the secret squads of revolutionaries in which not more than 90 class enemies were destroyed, the majority of them being moneylenders. In so-called encounters with the police about one hundred revolutionaries were killed. (About 20 revolutionaries have been sentenced to different periods of imprisonment and are languishing in jails without the help of any aid committees).

A wave of terror was let loose by the Punjab Government. Money was announced for the heads of revolutionaries and special police cells were created to hunt, torture and kill them, their family members and sympathisers. In Punjab the annihilations carried out by the Naxalite cadres traversed a typical pattern. Once the annihilation was carried out, revolutionaries had to leave that area and could never consolidate there again. Thus they shifted from one place to another and the real purpose of "rousing the masses and releasing their initiative" could never be realised. In the heat of terrorism nobody had the time to stop and think over this state of affairs. Nasty, individual police officers were attacked by the revolutionaries. There were fierce police onslaughts on villages — Dadahoor (Sangrur district), Manguwal (Jullundur idistrict) and Kala Sanghain (Kapurthala district.) The

entire population of the villages were indiscriminately beaten up, crops burnt and houses destroyed. People felt utterly helpless before such mass repression. How should the organised white terror of the State be opposed in the absence of some mass organisation? The line of terrorism, of course, had no answer to this most burning practical question. The climax was approached with the death of the seventy-year-old Ghadarite communist, Baba Boojha Singh. After he was declared shot dead by the police in a so-called encounter, there was not one demonstration in Punjab in protest against this wanton killing. For the CPI and CP(M) such opportunities proved really god-sent. They organised meetings in which instead of exposing the police, Naxalites were attacked for leading the masses astray and leaving them in the lurch at a crucial moment.

The New Phase

The bankruptcy of the line of individual assassination has been completely exposed and a new phase of criticism — self-criticism has already begun. But what should form the basis of such a process of criticism-self-criticism of the past? In spite of the longstanding experience of the international communist movement and the concrete experience of past Indian history, why in India the communist movement reverted to terrorism time and again? This is perhaps the fundamental question which the revolutionaries have not been able to raise and answer properly, and inability to raise and solve this question may again lead us to tread the old path in a new uniform. When we look from this angle at the recent history of Punjab, the most important single lesson which Bhagat Singh and his comrades have to teach is the futility of the path of terrorism. In a letter from jail, addressed to young political workers on February 2, 1931, he wrote: "It is said that I have been a terrorist but I am not. I am a revolutionary who has definite ideas, ideals and a long programme before him. I shall be blamed, as Ram Prasad Bismil has already been, that by remaining in a condemned cell my ideas have undergone a change. There is nothing like this—my ideas are

still the same. I have still the same burning enthusiasm and ideals in my heart which I had while outside the jail. It is my firm belief that with the Bomb we cannot achieve any advantage. This matter becomes clear easily from the history of Hindustan Socialist Republic Army. Throwing Bomb is not only useless, but many a time, it is harmful. It is needed only in a specific situation. The military department will continue to collect arms to be used only at a particular period." In a message addressed to the Second All-Punjab Students Conference (October 19, 1929) Bhagat Singh and B. K. Dutt wrote: "We cannot advise the youth to take up Bombs and Pistols. There are bigger tasks for them to perform. The Youth is to carry the message of revolution to the lakhs of labourers working in the factories, in the slums and the huts in the countryside — to disseminate it in every nook and corner of the country. Because Punjab is generally considered politically backward, therefore, heavy responsibility lies on the youth in this part of the country." But the Naxalites who followed the terrorist path adopted a sentimental attitude towards past history. They derived inspiration from Bhagat Singh and his comrades, incessantly uttered their names to show their spirit of sacrifice, but never analysed and evaluated the historical perspectives which gave birth to their movement and the lessons of its failure. Historical personalities were replaced with abstract sacred names and they marched on the forbidden path carrying red flags, with the names of Bhagat Singh and his comrades inscribed upon them. This is how history repeats itself and people have to pay for it, by nothing short of their lives. Incidentally, this also shows why the repetition of history is always a tragic one.

Impressed by the strength of the proletariat after the Russian revolution of 1905, a participant with a rare foresight made the following prophecy: "Terror has migrated far to the East — to the Provinces of Punjab and Bengal. It may be that in other countries of the Orient terrorism is still destined to pass through an epoch of flowering. But in Russia it is already a part of the heritage of history." But how poorly the

leading comrades of the Naxalbari movement in India were equipped with the elementary lessons of the Russian revolution is clearly shown by an article of Comrade Kanu Sanyal, 'More about Naxalbari' published in *Proletarian Path* (May-August, 1974). In this article, mainly he accuses Charu Mazumdar for placing the path of terrorism before the Naxalbari activists. Let me quote in detail: 'The points on which the leading cadres of the local Committee stressed were: the indispensability of workers', peasants' organisation and mass movement; necessity of inner-party ideological struggle.....; political work and actions are not opposed to each other, on the contrary action will be meaningless if politics is not put in importance and so political work is the condition for preparation; necessity of mass struggles through which organs of struggle are to be built up and necessity of mass organisation in urban areas. Charu Babu declined to agree on these points. In short, from the very start there were two distinct opinions which may be called confrontation between two lines. At this stage, a compromise was reached to learn through practice; that the cadres of the local committee would put into practice in Naxalbari area on those agreed points in accordance with their own experience and the new cadres would act according to Charu Babu's opinion in an adjacent area known as Chater Hat Islampur in West Dinajpur District. As Charu Mazumdar was attached to the workers and peasants struggle in Jalpaiguri district until 1952, the cadres of Darjeeling District were respectful to him and so this compromise was possible".

Look at the contradictions of the whole paragraph. The true leaders of Naxalbari compromised to learn through practice those lessons the validity of which, the success of the Russian revolution (not to speak of the history of the Chinese and the Vietnamese revolutions) has already shown. Beginning with the eighties of the past century, two generations of Russian Marxists in their personal experience lived through an era of terror, learned from its tragic lessons, and organically instilled in themselves a negative attitude towards the heroic

adventurism of lone individuals, Plekhanov, the founder of Russian Marxism; Lenin, the leader of Bolshevism; Martov, the most eminent representative of Menshevism; all dedicated thousands of pages and hundreds of speeches to struggle against the tactic of terror. Today, if we are to learn the futility of terrorism again through practice, then what have we learnt from history? What does it indicate? Does it not prove the theoretical poverty of the Naxalbari leaders? Kanu Sanyal indirectly suggests that Charu Mazumdar had no hand in the organisation and development of the Naxalbari movement and attributes the compromise purely to the respect he enjoyed for being attached to the struggle only until 1952. This argument is superficial and does not convince a logical mind. Kanu Sanyal fails to scrutinise the sphere where the real roots of compromise lay.

Political Suicide

The very fact of individual acts of terror is an infallible token of the political backwardness of a country and the feebleness of the progressive forces there. Terrorism by its very essence demands overestimation of personal heroism and, lastly such a hermetically concealed conspiracy excludes completely any agitational and organisational activity among the masses. The basic property of terror as a system is to destroy that organisation which by means of explosive ingredients seeks to compensate for its own lack of political strength. There are, of course, historical conditions where terror can introduce confusion among the governing ranks. But in that case who is it that can reap the fruits? At all events, not the terrorist organisation itself, and not the masses behind whose backs the duel takes place. In so far as terror breeds disorganisation and demoralisation in the ranks of the government (at the price of disorganising and demoralising the ranks of the revolutionists), to that extent it plays into the hands of none other than the liberals themselves. Individual terrorism in the eyes of a Marxist, who has seriously studied the tradition of three revolutions, is inadmissible precisely for the reason that it lowers the masses in their own conscious-

ness, reconciles them to impotence, direct their glances and hopes towards the great avenger and emancipator who will some day come and accomplish his mission. Last but not the least, in the blind alley of terrorism, the hand of provocation rules with assurance.

In Russia, in the epoch of Czarism, a young Marxist who went over to the ranks of the terrorist party, was a comparatively rare phenomenon — rare enough to cause people to point their fingers at him because at that time an unceasing theoretical struggle, a bitter polemic was being waged against terrorism. But in India, due to the widespread phenomenon of theoretical poverty and ignorance of the history of revolutions, the surging tide of terrorism enveloped the country in its grip in an extremely short period, and abuses and terribly venomous propaganda were hurled against those who tried to stop the blind tide. Those, who in retrospect attribute it to the mistakes and sectarianism of only a few persons demonstrate nothing but their sheer ignorance of the laws of class struggle and the dialectics of historical development. The spirit of sectarianism is the natural enemy of scepticism and sectarianism is not an error of individuals; it is a social portent of death. Terrorism as political thinking dies very hard and even its death is accompanied by most deadly far-reaching after-effects. Individual terrorism in its very essence is bureaucratism turned inside out. For Marxists this law was not discovered yesterday. Bureaucratism has no confidence in the masses, and endeavours to substitute itself for masses. Terrorism behaves in the same manner; it wants to make the masses happy, without asking for their participation. Like bureaucratism, the 'hero' cult is also the religion of terrorism, only with a minus sign. Owing to suppression inflicted by the ruling classes, it recedes for some time; swears by the masses to keep up its psychological balance, yet without being sincerely convinced that it was the same terrorist ideology which led to the destruction of scores of its best men. Now, when the question of unity among communist revolutionaries is the most serious and urgent question, every group

is talking of unity but still the remnants of terrorist psychology and political thinking are acting as an impediment in the path of Indian revolutionaries. But the question is: "Will it be possible without fighting tooth and nail against that politics which sanctifies terror, raising it into a system?"

At present, all the three groups in Punjab are emphasising in their theoretical organs the indispensability of militant mass movements. The SNS group has its own separate mass organisations such as Kirti-Kisan Sabha and Nau Jawan Bharat Sabha. During JP's Punjab visit in October 1974, when the CPI was busy mobilising the people for the anti-JP rally and the other parties were working to make the JP rally a grand success, the mass organisations under the influence of the PCRC staged an impressive demonstration at Moga on October 22 with the participation of 10,000 people to suggest the politics of the Third Alternative. The SNS group openly supports the JP movement and during the JP rally at Ludhiana, one of its workers addressed the public. But the PCRC firmly rejects the politics of JP and the argument of radicalising it from within in order to harness the movement for a revolutionary cause. Though the Punjab Student Union (PSU) is a single organisation, all the three groups have their influence among the students and a tussle is going on between the three separate tendencies to capture the organisation. It is worth mentioning here that at the beginning of the terrorist phase the PSU was completely abandoned, but later on it was solely revived by the efforts of the PCRC and after the Moga massacre emerged as a powerful organisation of

the Punjab students with leftist tendencies. A few months back a militant demonstration of peasants led by the Wahikar Union (peasant front of the PCRC) was fired at, at Jagroan, in which one man was killed. The PCRC is the only fast developing Naxalite group which is extending its influence among the different social groups and is the main target of CPI and CP(M) criticism. The latest spectacular achievement of this organisation was the powerful demonstration staged at Bhatinda on November 26. According to the local press (including CPI and CP-M) processionists numbering about 15,000 under the leadership of Wahikar Union, Bharat Naujiwan Sabha (the same name is used by SNS group) and PSU gheraoed the district headquarters to press their demands and immediate release of some of their workers arrested earlier. According to the press, the Naxalite elements were carrying lathis and sharp-edged weapons during the clash, when the police opened fire seriously injuring many people. Later on, the police brutally lathi-charged the demonstrators, people in the nearby shops and arrested many. The news of such a militant demonstration was suppressed by all the Delhi-based big newspapers, knowing well that the JP-blessed, so-called People's Front had no hand in it.

In their respective newspapers **Nawan Jamana** and **Lok Laher** the leaders of the CPI and CPM are sharply attacking the Naxalites, politically as well as ideologically. After the Bhatinda demonstration, in two consecutive editorials, the editor of **Nawan Jamana**, Jagjit Singh Anand, member of National Council of the CPI, criticised the complacency of the Government concerning the demand of the peasantry and thus leaving it at the mercy of the Naxalites. He also suggested that the Government should reorganise the police force from top to bottom, keeping in view the changing situation in the country. Just after the demonstration Avtar Singh Malhotra, Secretary, Punjab CPI Unit, rushed to Bhatinda to personally inform the peasants of adjoining areas that behind such demonstrations Naxalites have nothing but "political motives" and that at the crucial mo-

ment of confrontation with the Government they will leave them to their fate. The CPI is much agitated over this shifting trend of the masses in this area, especially the catchy slogans of the demonstrators such as 'howling' jackals with tricoloured belly and red face; look at the CPI's fraud, inside embraces, outside war, etc. etc. Both these parties, while hurling abusive jargon, point towards the terrorist phase to show how the Naxalites used to flee whenever there was a police onslaught after the annihilating action. This is another example of the negative contribution of terrorism to the fast developing mass movement in Punjab. To counter the designs of the CPI and CPM needs political and ideological solidarity among the various Naxalite groups in Punjab, the chances of which do not seem bright in the near future because of the uncordial relations among them. Punjab Naxalite Revolutionaries have no weekly or fortnightly political-cultural paper to answer the attacks of their adversaries and to disseminate their politics among the broad masses. Not only this, the open alliance of the SNS group with the JP-blessed "People's Front" also spreads confusion among the people concerning the line of clear-cut Naxalite politics. Keeping in view the crucial juncture through which the country is passing, in the present political context of Punjab when the CPI and CPM are finding it very difficult to keep the masses under their influence, the united action of all the Naxalite groups has the potentiality of building a significantly broad-based, powerful mass movement in order to have a considerable impact on the political life of the province.

১৩ই জানুয়ারী ৬-৩০ মিঃ

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Wages Of Nuclear Capability

R. P. MULLICK

SPEAKING on August 8, 1974 in Parliament, Mr K. C. Pant, Minister for Irrigation and Power, affirmed the Government's set policy to go ahead with developing nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, and claimed, besides, that the Rajasthan blast (of May 18, 1974) had an "electrifying effect on the morale of the people". His meaning would become clear if the "ruling elite" be substituted for "the people". The various statements, issued so far on behalf of the Government of India and the Atomic Energy Department, including one ascribed to a UNI report (of June 23) that the latter is working on a hydrogen bomb project, are pointers. Although professions of "peaceful purposes" are being maintained by the Government, and will be kept up for a foreseeable measure of time, nuclear capability has come to be regarded as the master-key to India's "special role" of leadership in South Asia, which is what the hard-headed pragmatist, Dr Kissinger, now concedes. What are the wages of this capability?

Since the cost factor of India's nuclear programme, in operation for many years now—far longer than was initially presumed—will never be divulged by New Delhi, its impact on the ever-increasing budgetary imbalance is the only yardstick one has for assessing it. The budget deficit is likely to soar much higher than Rs. 450 crores originally anticipated for 1974-75; the adverse balance of India's external trade, computed by Mr V. P. Singh, India's Deputy Commerce Minister, at Rs. 141.8 crores for the first five months (April-August 1974) is now assessed at Rs. 337 crores (for the first seven months, i.e. April-October 1974). Liabilities on account of imports has risen by 58%. As though the Government of India could not be forewarned, the plea is now being trotted out that the rising oil import bill is the only disturbing factor, as a neat sum of Rs. 1,120 crores had to be earmarked for importing 13.9 million tonnes of crude, 1.1 million

tonnes of kerosene and two million tonnes of furnace oil for 1974-75. That it is not really the entire part of the story is revealed by the continuing year-wise rise in defence-cost which percentage-wise is much higher than that in many developing countries in Afro-Asia, and which a poor country like India, its entire economy in a shambles, its rupee going down in par value credibility and the talk of a third devaluation gaining currency, can hardly afford. Even a classical imperialist country like Britain has effected a cut of £300 million from the yearly £3,600 (8-1/3% for the current year, but the economy is going to be much larger in the decade to come, approximately 12 1/2%)—and, even India's traditional ally, the USSR, with whose defence strategy it now shares points of dovetailing because of dependence on massive military aid from the latter, has effected a saving of £200 million roubles. Though the cut is less than 1%, it is significant.

Perhaps the brasshats of New Delhi, intent on "glory" for their domineering national-bourgeois State, will derive comfort from the fact that the global military expenditure has risen by 20% over the last four years from \$200,000 million in 1970 to \$240,000 million in 1974.

The Government may continue to tell the public that inflation is part of a world phenomenon, but people in the know will question the rulers about the incomparable inflationary rise in the total currency in circulation. Since the fact of this almost incredible increase in the quantum of money released by the Government of India every year, is quite well known, and since eminent economists have pointed out that the many symptoms of the acutest ever economic crisis in the country are due to the excessive thrust on non-production and non-developmental expenditure, the correlation between the atomic device explosion in May and the supplementary demand for an additional expenditure of Rs. 352 crores presented

to Parliament in August last cannot be missed. Market borrowings by the Government are mounting along with an aggravating budgetary imbalance; the total went up to Rs. 416.61 crores after a second floatation of Rs. 175 crores (November 1974); a third borrowing programme with two issues totalling Rs. 75 crores has now been added, on the much too facile presumption that the Centre's budgetary deficit will eventually come down (to some Rs. 126 crores or so) after the State governments repay their debts. The latter have, however, earned the reputation of bad borrowers.

In early June last year Norman Borlaug, the Nobel Laureate, warned that India is going to have a deficit of five million tonnes in food production because of the shortfall in fertiliser (about 5,00,000 tonnes). No notice was taken of it; the Government went about with the false bravado that all was well on the food front. Yet famine deaths were reported from West Bengal, Assam and Orissa to Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. The eminent economist, Mr B. R. Shenoy, has disclosed that the Government's food reserves are well nigh exhausted and that it does not have enough foreign exchange to pay for food imports. The "false investment policy" of amateur planners belonging to the elite-class has reaped the whirlwind for an unfortunate populace. But the rulers have not mended their old ways, ambivalence and wrong price policy. Farming tycoons and traders have been alternately frightened, forewarned (about policy measures) and appeased. As a result, procurement is below expectation even in wheat-surplus provinces. From an initial attitude of proposed reluctance to approach food sellers abroad (who still hold invisible strings of indirect political influence), to that of reconciliation to concessional food imports, even from the USA, is a brave stride indeed! Dr Kissinger had come and gone, holding out the prospect, niggardly though, of wheat sales; hope is rising for the return of the good old times of PL-480 aid-receiving, though under another name and a different alibi. The Minister for Agriculture, Mr A. P. Shinde, wants us not to stand on "false prestige". The ground is being prepared for another phase of receiving

munificence from abroad. The European Economic Community has responded with an offer of 1 million tonnes of food (in sales and grant); Canada with a measly 2,17,000 tonnes (compared to its surplus); even Britain has made a token gesture. Some people want India to switch her wrong economic strategy from the present "metropolitan heavy industry and centralised production" model to that of "decentralised", rural need based, and employment-oriented economy, but the leaders and planners of State (who are indeed one, though they sometimes talk in two voices like the fabulous creature with two faces and one body) are committed to their pet vision of "socialist" economics without caring to comprehend the preliminary rigorous phase of industrial revolution reaching out to grass roots of the population.

Meanwhile the rupee continues to decline, both at home and abroad. The Prime Minister and lesser Ministers keep on repeating their determination to retain the present par-value of the currency, but they know full well that our economy is dovetailed with the world capitalist system and cannot escape the consequences of the crashing Euro-dollar (euphemistically called the petrodollar) nor those of a floating pound sterling (with which the rupee is still linked).

The "strange" phenomenon of stagflation has been made much of. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry has sent its leaders to the highest lobby to cry for more of the profit bonanza and the Government's favour in the shape of tax relief and relaxation in licensing policy. They have been secretly assured of succour. The sugar industry is not going to be nationalised. After all the sorry experience of recurring losses, and/or recessionary

sluggishness in the public sector, the Government of India cannot but renege from its Fabian socialist goals. Nationalisation has come in for frequent and strong criticism by intra-elite factions committed to taking the country back to capitalist neo-colonialism—selling the country's priceless resources away at dirt-cheap prices, iron-ore, aluminium, tea and sugar, not to speak of mortgaging the country's technological expertise and semi-manufactures as well as some items of manufactured goods, at the service of the super-capitalist State and its proteges (like say Iran). Yet while the price of free market sugar soars at home, it goes plentifully cheap to European Economic Community countries and elsewhere.

The Indian Government knew that the oil crisis would aggravate the economic crisis. Yet it did nothing to find alternative sources of energy; atomic electricity is still in the stage of experimentation, no production on commercial scale being in sight. As a result, overtures had to be made to Iran, which led to the precursory phase of Indo-U.S. collaboration. The 'benevolent' Shah is interested in India's mineral resources (iron ore, aluminium) and industrial raw materials, as also technological expertise. From the day the Shah paid his return visit to India, the Indian ambassador in the USA has been at pains to convince the U.S. Government of the urgency for a much needed re-appraisal by the latter of its investment policy. It is, of course, true that American entrepreneurs and financiers will start moving in once their Government changes its attitude to the question of resuming "aid" to India, as was being done in the good old days of the Republican President Eisenhower and the Democrat President Kennedy.

This was in short Kissinger's message to India's private sector, and the Government of India; once the private capital-investors of his country realised that their Government was "genuinely" interested in India's development they would troop in. Since such interest hinges on the liberty the Government would allow to intending American investors for profit-repatriation, it follows that such a honeymoon can take place when the political climate at

home is more propitious, and when on the international plane the increasing U.S.-USSR rapport makes it a more politically feasible proposition for India to move tiltingly towards the USA with, of course, a Soviet passport. On October 11 last, India formally made the request for food aid—an appeal for long-term, low-interest shipments to be available under the American foreign food-assistance programme. With Kissinger came top-notch millionaires, industrialists, representatives of the famous Ford and Rockefeller combines. After Kissinger's departure, came the official assurance from Mr T. N. Kaul (the Indian Ambassador in the USA) to industrial interests, that "India would meet them more than half-way" should the latter decide to promote "new industrial ventures" in India, with the prospect of reaping "due profits" all the way. (November 14). Barely a month after has come the report of U.S. technology for a new process of enrichment of uranium, the core-element for nuclear arsenal. And if the USA tilts, should the International Monetary Fund lag behind?

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"Bangadarshan" : Some Scattered Thoughts

PHANI BHUSHAN GHOSH

VERY few writers in Bengali have seen Bengal with the same merciless audacity as Bankim Chandra did; and this is why **Bangadarshan**,* a monthly socio-literary magazine edited and published by him about a hundred years ago, still preserves its interest and readability, to a substantial extent. Its publication of late has opened before the reader a colourful panorama of a time so different from that of ours yet so basically similar in fundamentals.

I am not here concerned with Bankim Chandra's literary achievements. Mine is a humble attempt at putting into a coherent whole some stray thoughts occasioned by a loving look at the first volume of the journal. To begin with, Bankim Chandra is very difficult to write on, not because he played the role of a pioneer in the matter of resurrecting the Bengali language but because he adopted a radical posture utterly inconsistent with the temper of the age. The duality of his intellectual existence which is conservative in substance but radical in shadow has sharpened the line of difference between the creative and the critical part of his literary efforts. What is generally assumed to be the hallmark of a man of versatility is that his critical efforts and the creative ones are dovetailed into one another in a way that the fusion leaves nothing to be desired, and the former happens to be the inevitable end product of the latter. But Bankim is true to the significance of his name. Whatever he was, he was not the man to sacrifice variety and colour at the altar of a pleasant continuity or uniformity in his writing career.

Bankim Chandra was not a patriot in a conventional sense of the term, nor did he claim to be one. He was a loyal and devoted government servant who took his job seriously and did what he could to strengthen the basis of the British administration in India. The missionary zeal with which he tried to perform his duties as a responsible official of the

government stemmed not so much from his abiding obsession with his personal welfare as from an inner urge to be of some service to the country he passionately loved. His government service, not a thing to be devalued at that time, and which he put to the maximum use to focus a sizable number of socio-economic evils plaguing the country through his writings, was more an asset than a liability. The series of articles he wrote about Bengal's peasantry does not claim to be a socio-economic research project but still it dishes out a wealth of details, enough to put even a seasoned Marxist to shame. It is not my intention to idealise Bankim Chandra at the cost of Marxists, far less to attribute to him a conviction of, and attachment to a particular political philosophy that was indisputably not his. Bankim, as was to be expected, could hardly be critical of the zamindari system as such, what he has, in fact, given us by way of criticism in his 'Banglar Krishak' is a vigorous indictment of the erring landlords for their criminal callousness to the sorrows and sufferings of the sheepish mass of humanity under their divine command. To be true to Bankim's literary genius and enlightened social sense, it needs to be mentioned here that not infrequently did he have to work hard to conjure up before us the vision of a society with the English-educated landed aristocracy ruling the roost. Such a cheerful acceptance of the status quo necessitated its continuance and careful nursing, and Bankim's all-out efforts to highlight the innumerable social injustices bedeviling the fragile existence of Bengal's peasant population was the necessary by-product of such an attitude. In this country of massive greed and corruption poverty is treated as a religious necessity because its piecemeal relief is supposed to lead to the redemption of the guilty conscience of those who have usurped, with the active connivance of the State apparatus, the right

to bleed white the teeming millions through unmitigated exploitation. That Bankim is not averse to falling in line with the implied essence of the system the worthless products of which he has attacked with all the virulence he is capable of does not admit of any ambi-

Yet what a refreshing study his articles on the Bengal peasantry make, specially in the background of what obtains today. Were he to visit some rural areas of the truncated Bengal now, he would possibly be painfully pleased with the surprising similarity between what he saw about a hundred years ago and what he will be seeing now. The most sophisticated scientific analysis cannot give us an accurate idea of how much water has flowed down the Ganga since it came down to the plain from its Himalayan source, but the born-blind can without much effort be emphatic in his accuracy as to how much of the countryside is in the grip of poverty. Time is reputed to be the most invincible agent of Nature that wreaks havoc on man's work; its continuous rush onwards undoes many of his glories and achievements. But it seems to have come to a grinding halt amidst the melancholy gloom of the rural remoteness where the inaudible echoes of tired humanity go abegging.

Bankim's series on 'Banglabhasha' constitutes another bold attempt at rationalising the use of Bengali in different spheres of life. Bereft of any pretension of scholasticism, they have nevertheless proved to be sufficiently scholarly but without any academic bias. Scholarly but not a scholar in the conventional sense of the term, Bankim brought about a happy juxtaposition between his enormous intellectual acquisitions and style of composition, partly accidental and partly laboured, and so the reader does not tumble at the barriers that ill-digested learning and lack of clarity and precision in the thought process very often raise to erode the raciness of the composition. Bankim's impregnable obstinacy tore apart with contemptuous ease a pioneer's halting and hesitant calculations; on the other hand, it egged him on to rush headlong for a convincing analysis of the growth and development of the language over the ages and thereby to insert some guide-

lines to be faithfully followed in the matter of composition. Bankim's love of his native language was not wholly instinctive. His determination to wind up the 'gigantic farce' that was the educated elite's irrational craze for anything English cannot be said to have been triggered off only by his patriotic zeal; it was in all probability the result of a painful reappraisal he must have been compelled to make because of his earlier failure to leave any perceptible impact on those for whom it was meant by his misadventure in English writing. Unlike most of his contemporaries, he had the rare perception of realising early the ironical solemnity of dotting upon a language that was so far away from the soil of Bengal. Besides tracing the growth and evolution of the Bengali, his articles on 'Banglabhasa' may be interpreted as a necessary and laudable attempt at creating a suitable atmosphere for his reception as a creative writer who for the first time was instrumental in making many an innovation in Bengali and to some extent rescuing it from the bleak rigidity and colossal coarseness of its earlier period.

The volume under review is not without its inevitable quota of literary fun and frolic, though replete with oblique references galore to a particular section of society, obviously the so-called educated elite whose elitism was dependent more upon vainglory and shallowness than on their superior education and intelligence. Editing a journal containing a sizable basket of colourful miscellanies is always a tough job, particularly so in Bankim's time in view of the extremely limited readership as also of the miserably low potentiality of the language. With no one of outstanding ability to be guided by in the field, he was nevertheless clear and precise in conception, bold and progressive in outlook and thorough in execution, and did not allow himself to be hamstrung by any preconceived notion in the matter. His gravity was not a 'pose', neither was it exclusively temperamental; rather it was continuously soaked in the mellow congeniality of his wry, humour. His 'Ingrej Stotra' (ইংরাজ স্তোত্র), written in a satirical vein, was aimed at the moral degeneration which had turned the entire educated gentry into a small crowd of

spineless, subservient and adoring nonentities. Bankim, it should be noted, was no less an admirer of English rule and education than others of his class, but then he was too much of an individualist and too dignified a rational being to brew in the stew of others.

To Bankim the 'Baboo' as a class represented a conglomeration of degenerate individuals silently sinking into senility, ignorance, dullness and slackness due to a ruinous sense of self-compla-

gency. Bankim could see that the fabric of their make-believe world would crash down, not with a bang but with a tremulous whimper, into sheer chaos and confusion, if a brake was not applied. Surprisingly enough, Bankim's portrayal of a 'Baboo' of his own time still holds good in the case of his successors.

* Bangadarshan, Vol. I. Reflect Publications, Calcutta-4.

Feluda Makes His Bow

BY A FILM CRITIC

SONAR Kella is Satyajit Ray's 20th film in as many years. A pleasing finale to the year just out and a lively beginning for 1975. The attractions of the film are diverse: the supernatural, mystery, crime, adventure and the colour that is Rajasthan. Feluda, Ray's Byomkesh Bakshi, is till to reach the height of fame scaled by Saradindu Banerji's hero, yet accounts of his adventures are now avidly read every Puja season. This is Feluda's first bow to the silver screen.

Entertaining this film is. First, it is story-telling at its simplest. Also Ray's beguiling appeal is straightforward. The film therefore cannot but delight the juniors for whom it obviously is. Still the art born of Ray's craft is some good fun for the adults for a change. Even one with the most austere mien may not be ashamed of betraying one's stance.

The critic will nevertheless record his objections. First, the beginning. The introductory portion is longish with mystery and suspense playing the heavy weights. Fun is a long way off till a little before the middle passage Jatayu (Santosh Datta), the writer of crime fiction by the dozen, appears. This fellow carries loads of fun which from then on predominates. Why then the elaborate and meticulous building up of suspense? A hand dialling a telephone, a husky and coarse voice off the screen, the slow approach of a car in a deserted street of an evening, two pairs of

feet stalking along the road, a lone child, again voices off screen-suspense. A boy awake at night drawing pictures of images and landscapes he has never seen. A life before, parapsychology! Mystery. A kidnapping. More suspense, more so as it appears to be a case of mistaken identity. Now enters Feluda (Soumitra Chatterji) the master detective, Mukul, (Kushal Chakravarty) the boy with the story of a pre-birth, and parapsychologist Hemanga Hazra Saïlen Mukherji) leave for Rajasthan in search of Mukul's Sonar Kella. Bhabananda (Ajoy Banerji), the arch criminal, and his assistant Mandar Bose (Kamu Mukherji) follow the trail with the cloak now removed from their faces. The detective and his young assistant Topse (Sidhartha Chatterji) bring up the rear of this procession.

The plot seems to thicken. However, the cloak once removed stays open with the criminals, their foibles becoming at every stage more clear and more funny. The emphasis obviously has been shifted. Possibly, rightly, as the intended audience are the juniors. That perhaps is also the reason for abjuring violence in the extreme—the parapsychologist survives a push down a cliff.

Brevity of style and expression are the hallmark of a Satyajit Ray film. Detail of a local and faces typical to it are the first things to be noticed in almost every film of his. Ray by and large has not deviated from these qualities in **Sonar Kella**. Yet one notices

some dents. The individual shots are well composed, the transition from scene to scene, sequence to sequence is smooth. Only the overall scheme is overdrawn. And I am not sure whether the preponderance of suspense and mystery in the first part are in tune with the light-hearted adventure dominating the rest of the film. Secondly, brevity may at times be not the clearest form of expression. One's thirst for the colour that is Rajasthan remains unquenched and those who have been in Rajasthan have fill to in the gaps from memory. Thirdly, the comic side of the crooks. Excessive. Perhaps, deliberately done. Yet, why?

In acting, Kushal and Siddhartha steal the honours. Ray's handling of these two and the boy who plays Mukul of mistaken identity is excellent. The latter, even though his role is very brief, is a bundle of delight. Of the adults, only Santosh Datta, though he overacts, catches our eye. Soumitra's characterisation of Feluda is just competent. The crooks are disappointments. Specially Kamu Mukherji. His antics are boring. And may one ask whether his sudden change of mood after his villainous act—pushing the parapsychologist down the hill—will carry conviction with the majority of the audience!

Film Festival

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

AT roughly about the same time when the Calcutta dailies were reporting on the cricket tickets scandal and demanding to know what had happened to the tickets, the Delhi papers were, more or less, doing the same about the Film Festival. "Where have vanished Film Festival tickets?" was the headline of a report in **The Times of India** of December 28. While a Calcutta paper reported that the Chief Minister of West Bengal was annoyed at the way the test match tickets were sold or disposed of and was contemplating ordering an enquiry, **The Hindustan Times** of Delhi headlined its correspondent's report on the Festival: "PM snubs Gujral over tickets". A demand for an enquiry, judicial or otherwise, has not

been made so far but if the various newspaper reports are to be believed, Justice Khosla may well find yet another enquiry assignment awaiting him. Here are excerpts taken at random from only a few.

Times of India: "According to reliable sources roughly the Entertainment Tax Department has booked 150 to 200 seats in every show in every theatre. The police seem to have done the same. One officer in a ministry seems to have requested for 20 seats in a 6-30 p.m. show. The intelligence agencies apparently have also got into the act. A local James Bond, according to reliable sources, got in touch with a high official in the Ministry and demanded season tickets for the 6-30 p.m. show at Vigyan Bhavan on the ground that some suspicious gentlemen were attending the show and that his department wanted to keep an eye on them."

Hindustan Times: "With the sale of daily tickets yet to commence, season tickets which disappeared from cinema counters within two hours of the commencement of booking are now available freely at exorbitant prices. A number of pan shops in Connaught Place are alleged to be openly selling season tickets in black markets and the police have conveniently turned a blind eye."

The Statesman: "Some of the festival films were screened 'for judges only' at the Films Division Auditorium on Friday afternoon and many Government officials, policemen and others saw the films and they brought their children too. Hundreds of young men collected at the auditorium on Friday and protested against so many children being admitted. An official when asked told them that they were children of the judges and government officials and their opinion of the films were being sought (sic). There were many police officers at the screening and among them were some who were believed to be on duty at a demonstration elsewhere. Entries in the wireless log books showed that they were at the duty spots."

In a letter published on December 29, in the **Sunday Statesman** the writer notes that "there are hardly any tickets for the common man" and dolefully adds, "it is no use pretending that the festival will give an opportunity to

those who cannot go abroad for it is the elite of Delhi who can afford to buy tickets at exorbitant rates." Well, some innocence! Who did he think the festival was being held for if not for the moneyed, ministerial and bureaucratic elite of Delhi? In the same issue of the **Sunday Statesman** a report appears which reads: "a Rs. 7.50 ticket for **Siddhartha** was being offered at Rs. 150 in Connaught Place". The letter writer can take comfort from the thought that people were paying a hundred and fifty rupees for the pain of sitting through a thoroughly boring and bad film.

In reports and indignant letters to the Editor which have appeared in the Delhi papers one curious, and unanimous, omission is that no one has questioned the oddity of Delhi being chosen as the venue of the festival. The Minister, Information and Broadcasting, is reported to have said in a press conference that the slogan of the festival was "better cinema" and that "the people and intelligentsia in particular should be abreast of world thought". The capital city is not exactly known for its cultivation of "better cinema". As for keeping abreast of world thought through seeing the films, it is a moot question how many of the "intelligentsia" even among the elite will have a chance to see any of the large number of good films which would be screened.

For Frontier contact

VISALANDHRA

BOOK DEPOT,

Srikakulam,

A. P.

BY A DRAMA CRITIC

BRITISH rule in India triggered off a number of insurrectionary situations led by the peasants in different parts of India. These peasants were the victims of the usual colonial exploitation and were burdened by taxes and exorbitant rents and even ejected from their lands. The late 18th century and early 19th century witnessed a series of bloody revolts of which the Chuar rebellion in 1799 was one of the most significant.

'1799', a play based on this rebellion and revised since it was reviewed last in this journal, was performed at the Academy of Fine Arts last week under the direction of Ashit Bose. Even at the best of times it is rather difficult to portray an uprising on the stage as it does not always lend itself to very effective dramatisation and the emphasis is on group performance with little or no conflict between individual characters. In a case like this, audience interest may flag but what redounded to Mr Bose's credit was his ability to sustain our interest throughout the play. Every attempt was made to create the authentic atmosphere and locale and the essence of the 'chuars' simplicity was neatly captured.

The effect of a hill, forests, and distant vistas was excellently achieved by means of slopes and platforms at different levels. Snatches of plaintive tribal music kept up the intensity of the tortured atmosphere. Gobardhan, their natural leader, was a moving embodiment of the typical Chuar pride and sense of honour.

Unfortunately, there were too many instances of pseudo-sophisticated humour amongst the Chuar villagers which somehow did not suit the setting and atmosphere. The English collector's comic quips were perfectly understandable and the munshi's pidgin English evoked some hilarity but where a basically tragic situation looms over the horizon, why create a diversion with a barrage of badinage? Hemango Biswas's music deepened our understanding of the subtle nuances of the historical incident.

Against Intellectuals

Mrs Gandhi holds that "the doctrine of mass action is incompatible with the spirit of representative democracy". But the question is: representative of whom? And is the demand for a parliamentary probe into the licence scandal also against "the spirit of representative democracy"? Mrs Gandhi also condemns the exploitation of popular discontent by the opposition parties as anti-democratic. Again: Isn't this discontent itself rooted in economic-political factors? and isn't the ruling party making political capital out of people's hardships?

We do not know who has given our 'progressive' Prime Minister such bizarre ideas on democracy—it must be one of those 'radical' intellectuals serving in her secretariat. However, these ideas become clear and comprehensible once we pay attention to the class character of State power in India, recognising the fact that ideas are but rationalisations and tools of specific class interests—and "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas".

Two Congress State governments have promptly initiated the necessary follow-up action on the PM's ideas, and others may soon follow. First came the Haryana Chief Minister's reported decision to debar student agitators from government service and prepare "history sheets" on them for this purpose. And now the Bihar Government, it is reported, is going to ban political activism on the part of teachers under a proposed universities Act. Also to be noted is the Andhra Pradesh Government's crack-down on dissident writers.

We are teachers, and strongly protest against these acts. Such acts are not only obnoxious in themselves but militate against the very trend of history—the intellectuals are getting out of their proverbial ivory tower all over the world for the sake of "social responsibility", which can by no means be limited to servicing government policies.

The Government however need not be scared of intellectuals. While some are making only sophisticated arm-chair critical noises, most of them are on re-

duction sale with a fairly reasonable price tag—a research project, a foreign trip with some cultural delegation, a visiting professorship or post-doctoral fellowship under scholars' exchange programme, a ticket to some international conference in Honolulu, an advisory assignment, a vice-chancellorship or directorship, a Rajya Sabha seat or a membership of some inquiry commission will do: and secondly, as the Government must have discovered by now, power does not flow from the nib of the pen.

Dr Suresh Varma, Dr D. D. Sharma, Sri S. P. Srivastava, Dr Brij Mohan, Dr Rajendra Vvasthi, Dr R. D. Misra, Dr M. R. Maurya, Dr H. N. Mujoo, Dr C. P. Tewari, Dr T. P. Pandya, Dr K. C. Srivastava, Dr Shailendra Singh, Sri S. N. Sarena, Dr Surendra Singh, Sri A. K. Shukla, Dr Banvir Singh, Dr A. K. Srivastava, Sri R. K. Rastogi.

Lucknow University
Lucknow

'Melodrama'

Your editorial (23-11-1974) against the hue and cry made by the opposition parties over the lathi blows sustained by J. P. Narayan is correct in a way, as far as the pretension of them goes. But the fact you forget is that their melodrama is not intended for themselves, but for the mass of people who are still not aware of the necessity of throwing out the rotten rulers. Understanding oneself and making the masses understand are entirely different things. I think you have not given proper attention to this aspect in the outcry of the Opposition against the brutish actions of the Government. The attempt of the Opposition parties is to use the lathi incident as a sentimental question and make the people turn against the Government. To that extent I think it is correct, because our country is full of too many conformists, especially when you go down and down in the ladder of our society. The question is how to turn this mighty ignorant mass against this fascist Government.

M. N. D. Nair
Trivandrum

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