

# frontier

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## REBELS STRIKE IN AIZAWL

**T**HE death of three top police officials of Mizoram at the hands of the Mizo National Front rebels is apt to be linked with the underground's ultimatum to the plains people in the Territory to quit the area by 1 January 1975. The assassinated officers had been indented from different States. Normally, they should have had no business to be in Mizoram; they were in the troubled Territory because their masters had willed it. Those who killed them did not realise that their chosen victims were not free agents; they were carrying out policies in the formulation of which they had no say. If the assassins had expected that the police and security-force excesses against which there is genuine resentment in Mizoram will abate after the killing or New Delhi will be more inclined to a political settlement of the Mizo problem, they must have been thoroughly disappointed by now. Their action has merely provided the Union Government with a pretext to move more troops into the area and add to the misery of an already wretched people.

If the Union Home Minister's directive to the Mizoram Government is any guide, New Delhi has set its face against any political settlement of the Mizo problem. It is pinning its hope on a quasi-military solution which has been on trial in the Territory for the past seven years. Attempts to separate the rebels from the uncommitted Mizos have not succeeded. "Model" villages set up under the supervision of the security forces—that is how the army is known when they are deployed within the country—have fared no better than elsewhere, say in Vietnam, and the rebels have survived very much unlike fish separated from water. All this should make New Delhi realise that the rebels enjoy a measure of support of the Mizo people and the logistical support they receive from the uninvolved is not always extorted through bullying and terrorisation. The shooting at Aizawl is itself a pointer. The assassins could not have got into the heavily guarded office of the Inspector-General of Police where the victims were in conference if some of the men on guard duty were not in league with the rebels. They came, killed and went away. There is no evidence that they met with any resistance whatever. This would not have been possible if the bulk of the Mizo people were against the rebels.

With the emergence of a friendly Bangladesh the Mizo rebels are said to have been driven out of their shelter in Chittagong; the expeditions periodically undertaken by the Burmese Army have forced the rebels to vacate

their hide-outs in the Arakan hills. The rebels are now back in their own land, and apparently the security forces are unable to ferret them out. The outrage in Aizawl has been linked with the attempt on the life of the Lt-Governor of Mizoram, Mr S. P. Mukherji, early last year following the breakdown of negotiations between the Mizoram Government and Mr Chhunga and an MNF delegation. The delegation was told that the rebels must give up the demand for independence and settle for Statehood of Mizoram towards which the creation of the Union Territory of Mizoram was a big step. The rebels were not sold on the proposal. The attempt on the Lt-Governor's life and the murder of Mr Lulunmawia, a former vice-president of the MNF who wanted the rebels to be satisfied with Statehood, were grim indications of the rebel mind. Their attitude has been further hardened by the campaign launched by former Brigadier T. Salio over alleged excesses by security forces. The allegations are too serious to be slurred over, and they need to be investigated. New Delhi's policy of dealing firmly with the rebels, coupled with general punitive measures like imposition of curfew, may give cause for further acerbation of feelings and alienation of even those who are not prepared to go all the way with the rebels for an independent homeland. Hard-core secessionists cannot be separated from their supporters and sympathisers by harsh official measures. On the contrary, harshness may tend to unite them in a common resolve to get rid of the repressive machinery. This is a lesson that New Delhi should have learnt from its experience in the troubled north-east. Its uncontrolled reaction to the tragedy at Aizawl shows that it has not—not yet.

## Spider's Web

The palace revolution that Mrs Gandhi carried out in July 1969 marked not only the beginning of growing corruption in public life and perverse State control of the economy, but also the steady erosion of intellectual freedom in India. The press and the universities

began to come under systematic pressure from the Government. All India Radio became indistinguishable from a propaganda organ of the ruling party. The bourgeois principle that freedom is indivisible, with its implication that the attrition of political and economic liberties is followed by a similar eclipse of cultural and intellectual freedom, has been amply borne out during the past five years. Take, for example, the freedom of the press. At the height of the intra-party struggle following the July 1969 session of the AICC at Bangalore, several attempts were made by the crypto-communists within the Congress party to browbeat the newspapers that did not applaud Mrs Gandhi's manoeuvres. The late V. K. Krishna Menon even led a noisy demonstration to The Statesman office at Delhi and burnt copies of the newspaper, threatening it with dire consequences unless...

The fate of the proposed Bill for "democratising" the press is still uncertain. Periodically Mr Inder Gujral, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, makes minatory noise to keep up an atmosphere of fear and anxiety among managements of newspapers and professional journalists. The burning down of the **Searchlight** and **Pradeep** premises in March last year in Patna and the stoppage of government advertisements to some newspapers in UP and Haryana are too recent to need any special comment. The ransacking of the offices of a Bengali weekly in Calcutta last week is perhaps part of a planned policy. The latest example of how well these tactics have succeeded is provided by the observation of the International Press Institute that the press in India is no longer as free as it was when India became independent.

The situation in the intellectual and academic fields is no different. The Government practice of presenting awards to selected writers and artists every year has led to the emasculation of what is supposed to be the most creative section of society.

As for the universities, there is a growing tendency to revise university Acts so as to strengthen and officially confirm their subservience to the Government. The Jawaharlal Nehru Uni-

versity Act and the Aligarh Muslim University (Amendment) Act are almost identical in the provisions for Government representation on the authorities of the universities. The amendment of the AMU Act should have been criticised on the ground that being similar to the JNU Act for all practical purposes it made the university a department of the Union Education Ministry. What started at Delhi seems to be spreading to the States. The University Acts passed by the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly this year are a faithful imitation of the two Central Acts mentioned above. Attempts are being made to bring Calcutta University under Central Government control. It would not be long before universities all over the country revert to the position they occupied under Lord Curzon. The tragedy of Indian universities has been that neither the opposition political parties nor the academicians made any attempt to oppose the governmentalisation of institutions that can only discharge their academic and social obligations if they are free from political control.

## "Foolish" Legacies

The Congress leadership in West Bengal, which rigged the 1972 election—nowadays admitted by Congressmen themselves—is now busy driving the last nails into the coffin of what they call democracy. In recent months, as many as six appointments to the Assembly have been made from the Home Department. The postings range from Deputy Secretary down to lower levels of the Assembly.

There is a separate department for making appointments to the State Assembly, the Assembly Secretariat. It was the creation of the British, who for all their faults did manage to keep the Assembly free from the Executive and the Judiciary and to maintain its independence. The present Chief Minister of West Bengal, at whose initiative these appointments have been made, evidently feels that the time to continue such foolish legacies has passed and he can do away with them. In effect, the

Assembly Secretariat has become defunct, an expensive luxury.

As a senior member of the Assembly put it, the move reflects an assault on the independence of the Assembly. During the last session, for instance, the texts of Bills or official answers were rarely circulated in time, occasionally only five minutes before the start of the session. This was done to prevent any meaningful discussion even among Congress members about aspects of official policy. Some members, it is known, are more critical than others. In consequence, even the limited democratic process was negated.

Such developments are undoubtedly a logical sequel to election-rigging and the liquidation of political opponents. The irony is that the electioneering Communist and Marxist parties have evidently taken the parliamentary political process more seriously than the ruling Congress in West Bengal. The Congress has cruelly and cynically used elections as an instrument to further its own political ends.

Only a few weeks ago a prominent young Congress Minister assured a leading newspaper magnate in Calcutta that regardless of whenever the next Assembly elections are held in West Bengal, 1975 or 1976, "We will win, by applying the methods of 1972." Whether this was a subtle warning to the magnate, it is difficult to say. Since the Minister's visit to the editor, though, the chain of papers and magazines owned by the latter have noticeably softened their tone about the Congress.

## Wrong Policy

The quick termination of the strike by about 150,000 port and dock workers of the country has come as a surprise, and a welcome surprise to many people. The authorities with their characteristic foolhardy attitude to labour agitation could have as well dragged it for a much longer period. After the successful record of breaking the strike by railwaymen in May last year, the Centre appears to be itching for a reputation of being an unflinching strike-breaker. That feeling seems to have almost got

into its head. And many people were afraid that it would not miss the port and dock workers' strike also to demonstrate and perfect its strong-arm tactics. Fortunately better sense prevailed. What prompted the soberness is not clear. One of the reasons might be that with the elections approaching, the Congress decided to put on once again the reverse gear and dress up its favourite pro-labour image.

No one of course should have illusions about irresponsible trade unionism which quite often stems basically from the in-fighting within the ruling party. But the fact is that the Government has chosen to try its hard-line tactics on people who are suffering a lot. The railwaymen as well as the dock and port workers are certainly the least privileged among the working force. Their salaries have shown little rise during the last few years when other sections of organised workers have made substantial gains. But these people fill the most vital areas of the economy. On the ground of equity and social justice alone, the rail and port and dock workers deserve a better deal than some other privileged classes which seem to be getting away with all that they are demanding. And what about the employers who have defaulted on the payment of provident fund for years or those who have been merrily rigging prices even of controlled commodities in one garb or another? And, by the way, what has happened to the much-advertised industrial relations Bill which somehow keeps on shying from the light of the day? Is it because the Bill as it was originally conceived was slated against the employers in certain respects?

## On the Move Again

A New Asia News correspondent writes from Tokyo:

Throughout Asia, U.S. troops are on the move. Increasing tension in the military situation in Indochina has been accompanied by stepped-up U.S. military activity not only in the Philippines but also in Okinawa and in mainland Japan.

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Business Manager

It was widely reported that after the fall of the provincial capital of Phuoc Binh in South Vietnam to the NLF on January 7 more than ten U.S. Navy ships—including the carrier Enterprise—left Subic Bay in the Philippines and sailed in the direction of Indochina and the Indian Ocean. But less widely reported was the large-scale U.S. military training operation that began in Okinawa on January 1. According to Okinawan observers, this operation is much larger than any undertaken even at the height of the Vietnam War. The operation is in a U.S. Marine training area in the northern mountains at Okinawa.

At the same time, several thousand U.S. troops were sent from Okinawa to the Philippines on a combat loaded LST, and other Marines placed on four-hour alert. In addition, there has been considerable logistical activity at Naha port, Kobu and White Beach in Okinawa as military supplies are being sent to South Vietnam and south Korea.

At Iwakuni, a U.S. Marine Air facility in southern Honshu, there has been stepped-up touch-and-go training since December 30, to the consternation of local residents. Whereas there is usually no training during the New Year session, this year it was stopped for only one day. The training involved F4 Phantoms and AV8A Harriers. An unusually large number of large military transport planes have also been observed coming and going from the base.

Though it is impossible at this time to judge the meaning of all these activities, the general pattern suggests a major show of force.

# The Naga Struggle: 1947-1974—I

UDAYON MISRA

(Hopes for a peaceful settlement of the Naga problem have been dashed once again by the Government of India's renewal of the ban on the Naga National Council, the Naga Federal Government, the Naga Army, the Tatar Hoho and the other affiliated bodies. This article attempts to give a brief survey of the Naga struggle, particularly since 1947. So little is known to the average reader about the developments in Nagaland before and since the British quit this sub-continent, that plenty of false generalisations and misconceptions have crept in. Even today, the Naga struggle is mostly seen just as a secessionist movement by a militant hill tribe, aided and abetted by foreign hands. That there is another side to the issue is very often conveniently overlooked. This article attempts to place some relevant facts about the post-1947 developments in Nagaland. The struggle going on there is easily one of the most protracted ones in the sub-continent. Hence it is necessary to understand the nature of the struggle which is closely linked with the rise of Naga nationalism in the first two decades of this century.)

**T**HE present State of Nagaland covers an area of 16,527 square kilometres and has a population of approximately 5,16,000. This area is disputed by the Nagas who claim that there are large chunks of territory inhabited by different Naga tribes in adjoining Arunachal, Manipur and even across the international border with Burma. The demand of the average Naga is that all Naga tribes both inside and outside the present State of Nagaland comprising the Naga nation, should constitute one territorial unit. For example, the President of the rul-

ing United Democratic Front of Nagaland, Mrs Rano Shaiza, some time ago expressed her grave resentment at the India-Burma Border Agreement. She said that as a result of this agreement, large areas of Naga territory have been handed over to the Burmese Government. There was a time and that in a not too distant past when such a view about the Naga "nation" and Naga "territory" would have been cursorily dismissed; for it was widely accepted that the Nagas are a group of tribes continually at war with themselves and that they just did not constitute what one would call a nation. Things are very much different today and the fact has been acknowledged that the "warring tribes" have not only been welded together into a nation, but also that Naga nationalism constitutes a force which has kept the Government of India at bay for long twenty-seven years and more. Anyone who overlooks this fact while talking of the Naga problem will inevitably end up in a blind alley. We shall have occasion to discuss this in the course of the article. Let us first take a brief historical view of the Naga issue.

The Nagas first came in contact with the British in 1832 when Captain Jenkins and his party marched through Angami Naga territory on way to the Assam plains from Manipur. The first British expedition against the Nagas was carried out in 1839, and this was followed by several more expeditions over the years. Kohima was occupied on November 14, 1878, resulting in the speedy consolidation of British rule in the Naga Hills. In 1881 the Naga Hills District was established. This was preceded in 1879-80 by a fierce attack on Kohima by the Nagas. This last, desperate bid to oust the British from Naga territory failed, and the rebellious Nagas came under British administration. When on the eve of British departure from the sub-continent, the British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Act and the Extra-Provincial Jurisdiction

Act, it gave the new Indian Government powers to continue its administration in the Naga Hills. It is exactly this devolution of power that is disputed by the Naga National Council and the Naga Federal Government which assert that, except for the British, the Nagas were never ruled by any other people. As such, they claim that since the Naga Hills was never part of India, the British had no right to bring it within the scope of the Extra-Provincial Jurisdiction Act of 1947.

As early as 1929, the Naga Club<sup>1</sup> the only all-Naga organisation of that time, had submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission demanding that the Nagas be excluded from the scope of the constitutional reforms. The Club asked for Naga Hills to be kept under the direct administration of the British Government. In a memorandum, it clearly stated: "You (the British) are the only people who have ever conquered us and when you go we should be as we were". In short, the Nagas had demanded that they be safeguarded from any possible rule by the Indians. The memorandum ended with the following plea: "If the British Government, however, want to throw us away, we pray that we should not be thrust to the mercy of the people who could never have conquered us themselves, and to whom we were never subjected; but to leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times".<sup>2</sup> As many as twenty people representing different tribes signed the memorandum. For several years after this nothing of much note took place in Naga politics and it was 16 years later that the Naga Hills District Tribal Council was formed at the initiative of the then D.C. of the Naga Hills, Mr C. R. Pawsey. This Council was soon enlarged with representation from all the individual tribal councils, and in February 1946, the Naga National Council was formed. The Naga National Council soon emerged as the only political force in the Naga Hills and it was clearly representative of the Naga people. It had 29 members who represented the tribes on the principle of proportional representation and every citizen was supposed to be a member of the NNC.

Initially, the Naga National Council

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did not clearly spell out its demand for separation from India. Only when it became known that the British were planning to carve out a "Trust Territory" or Crown Colony comprising the Naga Hills, the present Arunachal and parts of upper Burma inhabited by tribals, to be kept under direct British control from London, did the NNC make it clear that when the British quit India, they should quit the Naga Hills. There was also another plan to guarantee the integrity of the Naga Hills on the basis of a treaty between the Governments of India, Burma and Britain. The Nagas rejected both plans outright because they could clearly foresee the effects of colonisation. The NNC made clear its demand for full independence. (The Indian National Congress too rejected these proposals but this rejection had nothing to do with the Naga demand for freedom. The Congress stand was aimed at including the Naga Hills within the territorial limits of India). In a letter to Mr T. Sakhrie, Secretary of the NNC, Nehru wrote in 1946: "It is obvious that the Naga Territory in Eastern Assam, is much too small to stand by itself politically or economically. It lies between the huge countries, India and China, and part of it consists of rather backward people who require considerable help. When India is independent, as it is bound to be soon, it will not be possible for the British Government to hold on the Naga territory or any part of it. They would be isolated between India and China. Inevitably, therefore, this Naga territory must be part of India and of Assam with which it has developed such close associations".<sup>3</sup> It should be quite obvious from this that Nehru too, at that time, did not regard the "Naga Territory" as part of India. Nehru makes it clear that Nagaland must join India because (a) it is too small to stand by itself economically or politically, and (b) it is strategically vital for the defence of India (though the second point has not been spelt out for obvious reasons). So, it was still too early to assert that Nagaland formed an "integral part" of India!

#### 10-year Scheme

The Naga National Council refused to accept any of these arguments and,

as the eve of British departure from India approached, it sent a delegation of Naga leaders to meet Lord Mountbatten, the last British Governor-General of India. This delegation was led by Angami Zapu Phizo<sup>4</sup>—the man who had come to exert phenomenal influence in Naga politics and whose untiring efforts had led to the fast growth of Naga nationalism. The delegation put forward the suggestion that India act as the guardian power for ten years after which the Naga people would be free to determine their political future. There was no direct reply to this request, and the Naga delegation was told to make its wishes known to the Advisory Committee on the Aboriginal Tribes which was soon to visit Kohima. When the Advisory Committee visited Kohima on May 29, 1974, the Naga leaders reiterated the same view. The Naga National Council, in its suggestion of a ten-year Interim Government of the Naga People, laid down the following terms:

(a) The interim government of the Naga people will be government by the Naga people, having full powers in respect of legislation, the executive and the judiciary.

(b) Nagaland belongs to the Naga people and will be inalienable.

(c) The interim government of the Naga People will have full powers in the matter of revenue and expenditure, an annual subvention to cover the deficit being given by the Guardian Power.

(d) For defence and for aiding civil power in case of emergency a force considered necessary by the Naga National Council will be maintained in Nagaland by the Guardian Power. That force will be responsible to the Naga National Council who in turn will be responsible to the Guardian Power.

The Advisory Committee refused to make any suggestion regarding the ten-year guardianship period to the Constituent Assembly, and the Nagas maintained that since they had their own Constitution, they would not accept any other constitutional arrangement. The deadlock had set.

The visit of the Advisory Committee was followed by Sir Akbar Hydari's negotiations with the Naga National Council

(June 27-29, 1947) as a result of which the Nine-Point Agreement<sup>5</sup>, also known as the Hydari Agreement, emerged. This Agreement acknowledged the Naga National Council as the sole political force in Nagaland and accepted the right of the NNC to control all aspects of Naga life ranging from customary laws to the ownership of land and taxation etc. But a hitch arose over the eighth point of the Agreement. Article 8, which was very subtly worded, declared: "The Governor of Assam as the Agent of the Government of the Indian Union will have a special responsibility for a period of ten years to ensure the due observance of the Agreement; at the end of this period, the Naga National Council will be asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a further period or a new agreement regarding the future of the Naga people be arrived at". The Naga National Council later claimed that the Nine-Point Agreement was rushed through without Article 8 being explained to most of the members who did not understand English, and who believed that this article ensured the Nagas' right to complete independence at the expiry of the ten-year period. For this, the NNC put special blame on Charles Pawsey, the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, and Philip Adams, Secretary to the Governor of Assam. Although the Agreement was approved by a slight majority, the minority members vehemently opposed Article 8 and declared the Agreement null and void. Immediately after this, a Naga delegation led by Phizo met Gandhi on July 19, 1947. Gandhi told the Naga delegation: "Nagas have every right to be independent. We do not want you to feel that India is yours, that this city of Delhi is yours... I do not believe in force and in forced Union. If you do not wish to join the Indian Union, no

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# New Trends in Malayalam Literature

PRIYANANDANAN

one will force you to do that. The Congress will not do that". When the Naga leader pointed out Akbar Hydari's threat to use military force to suppress the aspirations of the Nagas, Gandhi said: "Sir Akbar Hydari is wrong. He cannot do that. But if he does, I will come to Kohima and ask him to shoot me before they shoot one Naga". It is obvious that Gandhi took the Naga leaders to be simpletons and said whatever came to his mind. Yet the Naga delegation took Gandhi's words seriously only to discover before long the emptiness of such assurances. When Gandhi was apparently supporting the Naga demand for independence, (even if he took it as a big joke), Nehru was devising means to keep the Nagas within India. Yet, both were speaking for the Congress! The Naga leaders were to realise soon that unlike themselves, the Indian leaders said one thing and did exactly the opposite.

Nothing much emerged from the Naga delegation's discussions with Delhi and, according to earlier plans. Indian independence was declared on August 14, 1947. The Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills anticipating disturbances, declared that "the Independence Day, August 15, shall not be marked by any disturbance and the law hitherto in force shall remain in force". There was no disturbance, not because of the DC's order but because the NNC had decided to pursue a policy of "non-violence" to achieve its ends. The Naga Nationalists desisted from setting up their parallel government fearing the outbreak of widespread violence. They still hoped to obtain Gandhi's support for their cause which they thought they would lose in the event of hostilities breaking out.

(To be continued)

Footnotes will be given at the conclusion of the article.

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THE youth in Kerala, as elsewhere, are restless. The educated unemployed smoking beedis and roaming ominously in the streets, the pauperised peasants and labourers, the doomed weavers finding no other work, the grumbling State Government employees and teachers, the strikes and bandhs—these are the scenes one faces in Kerala. In this land of rivers and trees nobody is happy. More than 80% are living below the poverty line. The deep poverty in the interior parts of Kerala is even more intense.

The Government's vigil on the people is so intensive that it reminds of war time. The police patrol and question and chase away people if they are found in groups of three or four near the road or sitting on the culverts late in the night. It is as if a conspiracy is being hatched by these people. And you should not argue, for Kerala police are ferocious, brutal and libidinous.

The coalition Ministry claims that it has an absolute majority and the component parties brag that the Ministry is, by all means, going to complete its tenure of five years, thus taking the credit of reigning for the full term which no other erstwhile Ministry in Kerala did. In spite of it, the Government suspects every young man to be a volcano, constantly fearing an eruption. In its frantic efforts to cling to power, the Government finds the youth a threat. It is constantly haunted by a spectre.

Are these young men in Kerala not angry? Why don't they revolt? Demonstrations and other forms of non-violent protests are there, led by political parties of various brands. For one thing they do not allow these youngsters to go 'indisciplined'. The CPM literary weekly *Desabhimani* advises the school students to get signatures and lead peaceful demonstrations to focus the Government's attention on the soaring prices, rising unemployment, scarcity and other genuine demands. This method of agitation in

effect debilitates the potentiality of the youth. It defuses the development of constructive anger. But how long they can suppress this anger is to be seen.

Not all the youth are represented by political demagogues. A force is there in Kerala too, a force after the Spring Thunder. More and more people from all walks of life are drawn to this fold, comprehending the need for a change, conscious of the betrayal by the legal communist parties. Verghese and his Wynadu are red memories. More than any other political opponent, the CPM is vitriolic in attacking these 'misguided' young men. It has realised these young men as a potent rival and it is conscious of the putrid wound in its moribund body. The CPM sends secret circulars to their area committees warning them to be vigilant about the Naxalites who are 'out to wreck the left movement'.

Anger is now heard in Malayalam literature where an avant garde of young writers has taken up the cudgels against not only the establishment but also against the pseudo-progressive writers. The craze for Kafka, Camus and existentialism seems to have subsided. It had, in its initial stage, some appeal to the young Malayalam writers because they thought something new had come to exist and anything new was welcome. It was simply a hulla-baloo created by some Malayalam writers who had the privilege to be acquainted with Western literature and consciously imitated it. And anything Western was superior. As it did not represent the real life, the life of the wretched, it gradually lost its fervour. It is now regarded as a fake and thrown into the dustbin. A new wind is blowing. The Third World, the oppressed people's literature has attracted the young Malayalam writers who now realise that they are not a different lot, that they have very much in common with their brethren in other parts of the Third World. The boots of facism are the same. This emerging generation, this

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avant garde, is of course violent, outspoken and clamours for a total transformation. Smash the old values, the old symbols. They have unleashed an armed revolution in literature and they are with the revolutionaries. Tear the ballot paper into pieces, for it has no use for the oppressed. By tearing it the oppressors are torn into pieces.

Suddenly, underneath the ashes, sprouted a new song. It rained forty days incessantly. Earth and heart were ecstatic. On the other side, sucking the rain's nipple, young grass, labours, songs and flowers were blossoming.

#### THIS IS NOT THAT OLD HUNGER:

Today the hunger has transformed the veins of history into furnaces. It keeps the time on anvil and beats with a hammer. Till that transforms into a new sun of brave desires.

These are lines from a long and provocative poem written by Sachidanandan, an irrepressible young poet representing this new generation. Conventional words and idioms have been discarded and new words and idioms which were hitherto considered taboo are being used. Nevertheless the new literature is not a mere slogan-raising one nor is it artless. A new sensibility in appreciating literature is demanded.

The CPM led literary critics with its Desabhimani Study Circle as its forum are virulent in attacking these progressive writers. They have started accusing this emerging generation of being CIA agents. They try to hoodwink the people by propagating that there is no difference between escapist-idealist writers and these avant garde writers. They call this new literature Naxal literature. This is because, as in the political field, the CPM finds the emerging writers its potential rivals in the literary field also. They are also perturbed to see that some of their writers are deserting them. Desabhimani Study Circle knows that their pseudo-progressivism and Marxist garb are being exposed. The CPM leaders who have no locus standi in Malayalam literature have happily taken upon themselves the responsibility of lecturing on literature. EMS

does not end his lecture on any platform without uttering something on literature and without strangling it with his dogmas. In fact, he has assumed himself to be the theoretician of Malayalam literature. In every nook and corner of Kerala there are symposia and literary meetings organised by the Desabhimani Study Circle and the CPM dignitaries decorate the dais with their august presence.

#### Anarchist Tendency

Admittedly, this emerging generation is incoherent sometimes and, again, you may find an anarchist tendency in them. The reason for this may be that they are not disciplined, albeit their sincerity for revolution. They lack an organisation, something like that of the Revolutionary Writers Association in Andhra, and they lack a forum to discuss their creative talents. Paradoxically, much of this new literature is published in bourgeois periodicals. If you venture to bring out a periodical, you cannot survive unless you are propped up by advertisements, unless you have a strong organisation to support you. *Prasakthy* appeared with lightning and thunder—and disappeared after two issues. *The Street* is still there; it devotes some space to literature, but it does not come out for months owing to financial strains. The urge for publication forces the revolutionary writers to go to bourgeois periodicals which have monopolised circulation and which are liberal in publishing this new literature.

The avant garde trend is not confined to Malayalam literature; it is part of an all-India movement. Andhra Pradesh stands foremost. They have moved with the time and formed the Revolutionary Writers Association. But in Malayalam the new literature is in its primary stage; though it had its origin some three to four years back, it has yet to establish its identity. In order to mature, a correct programme needs to be drawn up and an association formed. The aim of this association should be to create a literature of the oppressed people in place of the literature of the ruling class. All com-

munication media have become the mouthpiece of bourgeois ideas. The oppressed people's aspirations find no place in them. The new literature should help develop the political consciousness of the people and enthrone them to struggle against the existing social system and at the same time it should differentiate the pseudo-socialism and progressivism preached by the so-called communists who are in fact the servants of the rotten system.

This is only a visualisation. There is yet no attempt to form an association of revolutionary writers in Kerala. Unless an attempt is made, the sincerity of these avant-garde writers will remain indisciplined which in no way will help revolution.

## FRONTIER

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# Notes and Counter-notes

HITEN GHOSH

THE publication of Manik Bandyopadhyaya's journal (in *Ekshan*, Autumn Special; Editor: Saumitra Chattopadhyaya and Nirmalya Acharya) is a remarkable literary event. Mr Jugantar Chakraborty, who edited the journal, says in his preface that the published document is only a third of the entire material found among the author's confidential papers, apparently not meant for public scrutiny. That much of these materials can be of immense help in understanding this enigmatic personality admits of little doubt. Whether Manik Bandyopadhyaya himself would have relished such a revelation of his character through the publication of his secret papers is a different question. The fact remains that every human being, however bold and frank, would like to make a secret of a part of his life. The effort at concealment goes hand in hand with the desire to take others into one's confidence. With creative writers, the desire for secrecy is reinforced by their uninterrupted exposure to the glare of public scrutiny which their works make inevitable. The works themselves being a sort of public confession on the part of their authors, the effort at secrecy is to be seen as the reverse of this creative compulsion. It is part of their desire to keep their personality intact and inviolate—a personality that cannot help giving itself away through its itch to create.

It is interesting how this secretive counterpart to the creative urge for self-revelation can operate even in confessions intended for publication. An exaggeration of one's vices or virtues can be part of this game of self-concealment. But this desire for concealment cannot be complete in anyone who has put his thoughts into words, however secretly or cryptically. One would not confide even to one's pillows something one would keep inviolably secret. In this sense the publication of Manik Bandyopadhyaya's confidential diaries cannot be regarded as going against the author's wishes. But there

is a far more important sense in which an author's own wishes can be ignored in bringing out any material which might shed light on some aspects of his life and works, without showing disrespect to his memory. A great author is a public figure and his works are public property and even something that apparently brings his memory into disrepute ultimately redounds to his greatness. It casts no reflection on his genius to be shown as being made of common clay. Besides, it is improbable that Manik Bandyopadhyaya, who was so pitiless in excoriating humanity, especially in his early novels and stories, would balk at exposing himself to the critical gaze of his readers.

The contents of this remarkable document will not please the prurient but they may yet shock the prudish. A mere day-to-day record of his author's unsuccessful war against an inveterate addiction to alcohol, the diary offers little in the way of forbidden pleasure. In major part it confirms the impression one already has of this propagator of stark realism in Bengali fiction. There is the same shrewd observation, the same passion for intellectual integrity, the same ruthlessness in exposing human frailty. And there is also a brooding sense of fatality in human affairs, which again is embodied in his early works. With transparent candour he faces the issues in his private journal very much as he does in his fiction. Indeed, candour is the most remarkable quality which exudes through these pages, along with an innocence almost childlike and defenceless, and a simplicity which went hand in hand with a penetrating insight into human motives and human situations. A rare and remarkable combination of personal traits! That his journal makes such absorbing reading is because it is infused by this peculiar charm of his personality which was physically reflected through his eyes and in the expression of his face.

Manik Bandyopadhyaya had epilepsy, which led to alcoholism. But al-

coholism was not the sole cause of his poverty and lack of wordly success. His peculiar vision of life, which was born of an uncompromising candour and realism, made him an outsider in the best sense of the term; while it unfitted him for any ordinary avocation of life, it also made it impossible for him to earn a decent living by writing. Quite a few of his works bear the stamp of genius but they were not anywhere near being best-sellers. Sloppy sentimentalism which was the hallmark of popular success in his day as it still is in our own, was at the furthest remove from his temperament and literary vocation. Nothing could be more repugnant to his lifestyle and artistic faith than to compromise with the demands of popularity. By giving a wide berth to the trends in popular taste he ensured life-long poverty, but could not endear himself to the highbrow dilettantism of the upper class literary circles. The latter were equally shocked by his frankness and chose to ignore him. As these were the arbiters of high literary taste, true recognition of his genius also came much later. He remained a lone rebel who stuck to his guns to the last, caring neither for popular success nor for highbrow acceptance. From time to time he tried his hand at odd jobs but he could not bring himself to making a living by any regular occupation like an ordinary individual: he was not normal in that sense. Others among his contemporaries escaped poverty and isolation by making terms with the needs of a regular occupation or demands of popular taste. And a few made no bones about falling back on inherited sources of independent income. A real non-conformist, Manik chose poverty and terrible isolation rather than compromise his all-consuming creative urges. Like Prometheus he knew that eternal torment is the prize of man's endeavour to conquer his fate.

The journal gives the impression of a man who stood above his suffering even when succumbing to it. His alcoholism or recollections of youthful dalliance have nothing in common with the pseudo-rebellion of the latter-day angries or hungries. The artistic and literary rebels of our own day have al-



## Ashrams of the East, A Mirror for the Larks of the West

ready acquired respectability through the incomes and recognition bestowed by the Establishment. How many of these have the courage to recall their past with the frankness of a Manik Bandyopadhyaya? It is no wonder that even these avant garde writers would not touch Manik's journal with a barge pole. Nor is the document likely to be welcomed by the so-called progressives of our day. I have no doubt whatsoever that Manik's acceptance of Marxism was genuine, but it was no blind faith with him. His search for a meaning in man's struggle against the condition of his existence led him to Marxism, but he never bought his new belief at the cost of his inquiring intellect. True, it is not easy to explain away his increasing faith in the Mother Goddess towards the end of his life. We are not sure that he was not gravitating away from dialectics towards the traditional Hindu concept as embodied in the gruesome and archetypal image of Kali. It is arguable that if his literary powers were not permanently impaired by alcoholism and poverty, he might have embodied his new outlook in immortal works of art. Whether this new development would have pleased the ideologies of the left literary guilds is highly problematical.

Each year thousands of French youths leave everything for going to India in search of wisdom, truth and felicity. In short, a reason for living. But most often, they find there nothing but degradation. In the fascinating world of Gurus, Sadhus and Swamis, there is more of hell than the promised land.

**Pondicherry:**—There are those who believe and those who don't. It is like the stars, the lines on the hand, marc-brandy. Those who don't believe are naturally ignoble materialists who refuse to accept evidence. As for myself, I don't believe in it. So much the worse for me. I have gone to Auroville. To Aurobindo's ashram in Pondicherry. I have read the texts of the "Mother", I have discussed with the believers and I have not been touched by the grace. I have felt like bursting into laughter. And an enormous laugh at that. One has no right to organise a system like this: to recuperate the lost "poor souls" and make them believe in such sheer nonsense! This is not honest. Specialty, when, in any case one takes all their money and makes them work.

Pondicherry is an erstwhile French colony which wallows in misery, oblivion and monsoon moss.

First, it is necessary to know that there are two different things in "Pondi": The Ashram, within the town proper, and a few kilometers away, Auroville, that dream of an ideal township which has become a modest, neglected store-yard. One hears a lot about Auroville, but let us begin from the beginning, that is to say, the Ashram.

It was founded more than half a century ago by the celebrated Indian thinker Aurobindo who, escaping the British, had to take shelter in the French enclave: Aurobindo was a great philosopher and his writings are among those counted among the heritage of Universal thought. Teilhard de Chardin, Romain

Rolland and many others read with interest his works which sought to realise a synthesis between Hinduism and Christian thought.

As it always happens in India, the sage was rapidly surrounded by disciples and admirers. And this is how the Ashram came to be founded.

Among these adoring disciples was a woman of Franco-Lebanese origin who had till then lived an agitated life: Madam Mira Alfassa, quite quickly, she became the favourite disciple of the master; It was she who managed, remarkably well, the Ashram, and then through promotion after promotion, she became practically the squal of the Guru, the "Mother", "incarnation of the divine Mother". She explained and popularised Aurobindo. At the death of the latter in 1950, she succeeded him as the head of the Ashram and she did not hesitate to propagate her "message".

People said to be "serious" withdraw quietly, but the business was launched. In the course of years, the "Mother" alias Mme Alfassa attracted thousands of disciples. She published books and appeared four times every year on the balcony and received a few privileged ones to kiss her feet.

The Ashram never ceased to grow and prosper. It possesses over a thousand houses in Pondicherry. It has its meditation halls, an immense library, schools and workshops. Over two thousand disciples live here permanently, to say nothing of those who come and go. Some pass on, others come back regularly.

It is now necessary to tell a few truths. Aurobindo was a great thinker. Mme Alfassa was a good manager. But unfortunately, her close rapport with the Master had, no doubt, turned her head, made her think of herself also as a sage. The books she published and her thoughts are banal and of a distressingly low standard. It will be cruel to persist on this.

One can, therefore, blame the Pondicherry Ashram of an intellectual swin-

For Frontier contact

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Fort, Bombay

JANUARY 25, 1975

die for having propagated the banalities of Mme. Alfassa, tanks to Aurobindo's prestige and teilhards' appreciation.

The second reproach is even worse. The "Mother" was able to organise around her own person a system of idolatry which was absolutely intolerable to any person with a sane mind. Big poster photographs showing the feet of Mme. Alfassa are sold at the gate of the Ashram. The devotees, who all have this poster in their cells prostrate themselves for several hours each day before the feet.

Mme. Alfassa died in November 1973 at the age of 95. At the Ashram they say that she lives forever that she has simply left her outer shell but her spirit continues to direct the Ashram.

I have visited the Ashram for a number of times. Everywhere, in each class in each workshop, one finds two or three photos of the Mother. If one questions an ashramite about the reasons for his coming here, on what he does and his future or any matter whatever, the answer invariably is: "It is the Mother's wish, it is for the Mother to decide, the Mother will choose".

I have talked with the adoring disciples. They say: "uptil now humanity had Buddha, Christ and Mohammad. Men by their own efforts cannot attain full selfrealisation. For enlightenment it is necessary that a superior grace should descend from above and a constant aspiration should rise from below at the same time and he who gives and he who receives form a perfect couple.... At last, for the first time in the history of mankind, there has been this complete

and marvellous combination, this full and total realisation with Aurobindo and Mother.

Apart from the weakness of the message of Mme Alfassa and the idolatry that surrounds her image, what shocks the casual visitor in Pondicherry is surely the business side of the enterprise. Mme Alfassa took over all the assets of her "clients", received the donations of the distant admirers and managed everything with great competence.

The Ashram (which is exempted from taxes as arranged by a number of adept businessmen) possesses a factory for food products, "Aurofood"; an agency for travel, "Aurotravel"; the confectionaries, "Aurocreation"; the plastic factories, "Honesty"; etc., and has become one of the biggest landed proprietors of South India. All this would have been perfect if the people of the Ashram sought the participation of the most unhappy Indian population in this enrichment. Unfortunately, there is nothing of this kind. There has already been a number of incidents between the Ashramites and the people of Pondicherry. There will be more in future. The followers of Mme. Alfassa are not much concerned about the misery of the Indians who surround them. This is shocking.

And then one day the Mother had the idea of Auroville. There again it is not what one usually believes. Before coming to Pondicherry, I naively imagined that it was the question of constructing a dream city where ultimately all will be brothers and happy. And I was told that in the middle of the elliptical city there would be a grand monument in the form of a sphere. I thought that the sphere would be a symbol of the world, of friendship among men, brotherhood etc....

Well, here again, I was deceived. Auroville is not the city we had once dreamed of; it is "Donogoo to the glory

of Mme Alfassa". The grand monument I was told about, the immense sphere, does not symbolise fraternity. It is only the "Matrimandir", "the residence of the Mother's soul". It is here that the "supreme force of Mme Alfassa resides since she discarded her shell".

Happily, the "Donogoo of Mme Alfassa" will have less success than that of Jules Romain. When one goes over the terrain where Auroville would come up one day and where, at the moment, there is nothing but a few store-yards, two class rooms and a few temporary structures, one is reassured and feels that things will not go far. While 50,000 must "come to the harbour", there are only 200 poor devils, who, in spite of their faith, have begun to lose hope.

Two things have specially surprised me. First, that so many Westerners who, wanting to escape from their civilisation, should have chosen in this way to prostrate themselves at the feet of so mediocre a master; secondly that UNESCO, which has so much to do in this land of 450 million illiterates, should have the idea to support a project like Auroville, raised for the glory of the thoughts of Mme Alfassa.

Let the young Frenchmen and women, think twice before abandoning everything for going to live in Pondicherry. Afterwards, it is often too late.

(By a Special Representative in  
Le Figaro, Paris).

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## A Little To Loud

BY A DRAMA CRITIC.

A. I. Dashker Abimannyu was staged at the Academy of Fine Arts on January 13 by the theatre group Chārandal who have several other plays to their credit. The trapping and merciless killing of Abhimannyu called from the Mahabharat became a starting point for a series of vignettes depicting the indomitable spirit of man in confrontation with British imperialism, Hitlerian Fascism and American neo-colonialism. The Indian Mutiny, the insane persecution of the communists after the burning of the Reichstag; the heroic resistance of the Vietnamese freedom fighters with the redoubtable Van Troi blazing the trail these were the key metaphors of the times they were enacted in. All this is now history. Right now in this very day and age the war of attrition rages at home in a wholly different context.

India is in the throes of a crisis. The result of a system which accentuates and aggravates inequalities and comes down heavily on those who form the vanguard of any protest movement. In recent years there have been several attempts to redress this imbalance but the Establishment has marshalled all its forces to crush the spirit of rebellion and by a replication of the British method of dividend rule managed to stave off any immediate dangers to its authority. But somewhere the candle burns with a ruddy glow deep inside the hearts of

men and women and the urge to begin an armed struggle for the final act of liberation will begin to gain momentum once again.

This is the basic theme of the play but more often than not it degenerated into loud propaganda and slogan-mongering. This was not an edifying theatrical experience, it was a rough and ready history lesson with the object of rousing mass consciousness. One could, perhaps, be excused for believing that the IPTA went in for these extra theatrical effects in the forties when the situation demanded a direct statement. One does not doubt the necessity for bringing about a radical change in the minds and thought processes of the people today by ventilating their grievances openly and giving them a sense of historical perspective but on the stage a subtler treatment might have been more acceptable. This was too raw, too bla-

tant and perhaps not wholesome drama. As we got the message of the play from the short vignettes time and again, there was no need to use red lighting and play up the colour quite so often.

The techniques adopted to beef up the play, like introducing the minstrel who represented the voice of conscience, as it were, and organising the judgment scene towards the end were quite good although the stark solemnity of the trial of the police officers and the minister was somewhat dissipated by a burst of clownish humour from Dilip Bose as Chitragupta. All this is not to suggest that the home truths dealt out so convincingly and the picture drawn of a government at war with its own people did not stir our dormant sensibilities. As a war-cry it was most successful but is the stage quite the sort of place for it to be uttered on? Quite honestly, there isn't an easy answer to that.

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## Krishnapaksha

BY A DRAMA CRITIC

RELIGION is an age-old weapon in the hands of exploiters and they are using it even today to veil their misdeeds and corruption. Bijan Bhattacharya's new play *Krishnapaksha* (produced by Kabach Kundal) is set in the temple of Sheila Devi (image of the goddess Kali believed to have been worshipped by Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore). Kashinath, the high priest, enjoys patronage of industrialists, jotedars and bureaucrats. In return Kashinath lets them use the temple for rice-hoarding and enjoying wine and woman. To the inmates of the temple, who receive religious teachings from him, Kashinath explains this as an illusion created by the goddess. Attracted by the historical antiquity of the image a noted professor of archaeology arrives and Kashinath & Co. entrap him and use him to their purpose. Scholarly articles of the professor about the deity published in foreign journals bring financial aid from the Ford Foundation to the temple trust. The play ends on the day of a religious congregation organised by the temple trust, when the inmates of the temple revolt.

In a semi-feudal society, the common people's fear of god and religious fanaticism is a great hindrance in the path of liberation and a bounden task of the socially-conscious artist is to strike at its roots. In this context the theme of the play is vital. But exposition of the ruling classes and their various weapons and analysis and solution of contradictions among the people are two aspects that should be treated with equal emphasis, if not with greater stress

For Frontier contact

NAVODYA PUBLISHERS,

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Eluru Road,

Andhra Pradesh.

on the latter. Unfortunately, besides a suggestion of a hungry crowd chanting hymns on the rear stage and a single appearance of the villagers, Kashinath and his patrons reigned supreme on the stage throughout the play. Again the question arises, who will dominate the stage—exploiter or exploited?

So far production is concerned Mr Bhattacharya was able to create a fear-

ful atmosphere of the temple with its queer inhabitants. The handling of the sequence with the American tourist is excellent, though one may wonder why a foreign character in a Bengali play should speak in English. Tapas Sen's lighting was not up to his standard. Apart from Bibhuti Mukherjee's Kashinath, Priyabrata Banerjee's John and Bijan Bhattacharya's Atmaram, general acting standard was amateurish.

### Clippings

## His Gun is in Good Hands

Ramon Arbona

We would have wanted the news to be false, but a phone call confirmed it. Miguel Enriquez, Secretary General of Chile's Movement of the Revolutionary Left died in combat after a two-hour gunfight with the fascist military. His companera, Carmen Castillo Echeverria, seven months pregnant, and Miguel fought it out all that time. The military's numerical and technical superiority won out. He was killed. She is wounded, probably badly so no one knows yet—and is detained by the military, which is to say she is suffering the cruel tortures in which fascists specialize.

This is a hard blow to the Chilean people. Because if anyone was in the vanguard of humanity it was Miguel, leading inside the territory held by fascism, the resistance battles and the re-organisation of the people preparing for the war that will carry Chilean workers to a definitive victory. And to say Chile is to say the entire southern tip of South America because Argentina and Uruguay are so integral a part of that war that the battle cannot be fought exclusively in any of their territories. In fact, it is no longer a matter of Chile alone or of fascism in Uruguay or of pre-revolutionary instability in Argentina, but of war in the southern tip of the South American continent.

Miguel Enriquez, founder of the MIR in 1965 and its Secretary General since, then was only 30 years old at the time of his death. In his short political life

he had become a major figure in the Chilean struggle, leading an organisation that never made concessions to reformism nor deviated to the ultra left. On the contrary, the MIR has grown on the basis of a firm and precise revolutionary practice. This was why Miguel's prestige, his influence, went beyond the leadership of his own party and made him a leader of the entire Chilean left. Experienced in underground work in the years preceding Allende, Miguel's party did not lower its guard during the Popular Unity years and now continues to grow in every way under the iron dictatorship.

The MIR issued clear instructions to its militants at the time of the coup: no one must leave Chile unless sent to carry out a concrete task. And remaining in Chile did not mean waiting passively for the dictatorship to fall as a result of its mistakes. "The dictatorship has no recourse other than repression" stated a communique from the MIR's Political Commission issued one year after the coup. It added immediately: "the people have no recourse but to overthrow it by force. The people have no alternative but to unite and organise until victory is won".

The MIR is completely committed to that task. Miguel Enriquez was committed to it also, right up to the very moment of his death. But while a leader may have died, the task continues its victorious ascent. Because Miguel En-

riquez's death is a hard blow we can't deny it—but it is only that, a hard blow. The organisation is untouched. The new Secretary General, whose name will not be known for a long time, was selected long ago. Miguel's gun is in good hands.

In that sense, the best tribute to this vanguard fighter is being written by his organisation and the Chilean people as they continue confronting the dictatorship.

## Letters

### U.S. In India

A lot of people today in India are vanguard fighter is being written by his dangers of private American investment in this country with the multinational corporations muscling in to grab the loot. Right from the time the Marshall Plan was put into operation till the present day, all the American aid givers look for is how to dominate the economy of the country receiving the aid and make it totally subservient to American interests. This has been borne out in hundreds of cases specially in Asia and Latin America. It is largely through American foreign aid programmes that even a country's import pattern undergoes a forcible change.

One must remember that U.S. aid is invariably used as a weapon for sheer blackmail. The Bolivian Government in 1952, the Argentine Government in 1963 and the Algerian Government in 1966 were all victims of American interference and had to accept dishonourable terms of trade in order to survive. Moreover, whenever huge sums of local currencies were held up by the U.S. Government as a result of disgorging its surplus agricultural products on underdeveloped countries, this accumulation became a powerful lever for exerting influence over the policy decisions of the respective countries. She never shied away from shamelessly toppling any regime which showed an independent spirit and wanted to exist on its own terms. One Latin American country after another has had to succumb to U.S. economic pressure and superior

military power with the exception of Fidel's Cuba which successfully stood up against America's gunboat diplomacy and won hands down.

Strangely enough, all underdeveloped countries receiving aid from imperialist America are chronically in debt because of the aid received and somehow their indebtedness continually increases. This naturally impedes economic advance and these unfortunate countries find themselves in the fantastic position of paying out more to the USA in interest on past indebtedness than they are receiving in aid. Who does not know that when a capitalist foreign investor descends on an underdeveloped country he will quite naturally grab the most profitable and valuable business opportunities for himself with all the money, the management expertise and the production know-how at his disposal. The State Department is always behind him ready to grant and withhold 'aid' and these foreign corporations are quite obviously not interested in the least in integrating their business in a long-range plan for the country's economic advancement and eventual economic self-sufficiency. These rapacious organisations want super-profits and within the shortest possible time. To be obligated to a cynical and ruthless imperialist power like America seems most unwise and short-sighted and the fact that India is now on her open list of potential victims can only mean that we shall slowly shed the semblance of freedom we had in making our own decisions and become totally subservient to foreign monopoly capitalism. The only consolation is that the world capitalist crisis is gaining momentum and there is thus the distinct possibility of all imperialist-capitalist conspiracies coming to an inglorious end in the not too distant future.

Samir Mukherjee  
Calcutta

### Raid On Weeklies

Allow me to voice the anguish of honest citizens over the destruction of the offices of the weeklies. *Frontier* (English) and the *Darpan* (Bengali) in Calcutta on January 14 by a gang of young men. There should be a thorough en-

quiry into the attack on the newspapers and the persons responsible for this dastardly crime should be given exemplary punishment. Life loses much of its meaning if a person is not even free to express a view in print without suffering the harassment of physical assault on him.

Subhas Chandra Sarker  
Bombay

\*The offices of *Frontier* have not been destroyed. Only the typewriter was. Editor.

### This Too Gandhi

For keeping the record straight I like to quote from N. V. Hodson's *The Histor-makers* just the lines preceding the excerpt quoted by Mr Shukla: "Nehru called him 'an extraordinary paradox'. If he was naive, he was also cunning; if high-principled, opportunist; if transparent, enigmatic; if tolerant, fanatical; if always ready to negotiate, impossible to pin down; if for long period quietist, on occasion the spearhead of revolt; if dedicated to non-violence, the leader of campaigns inevitably incurring violence; if ascetic, pleased by the best and loving the company of women; if catholic in his view of religions, profoundly Hindu in feeling; if obsessed by Hindu-Muslim unity, opposed to any big constitutional concession to the Muslims; if ready to assume leadership equally ready to avoid responsibility. To attempt a Hegelian synthesis of these antitheses is as abuse of ingenuity".

Many with Mr Shukla (*Frontier* December 28) will feel baffled by these extremes and confess to a lack of enthusiasm in adding to the Gandhian lore. Erik Erikson's analysis of Gandhi largely upholds the above. And, Gandhi like God, became cover for many crimes. Why is he so popular with the moneybags? For he was their man. Gandhi's disciple, Vinoba, a Gita scholar to boot, approved India going nuclear, and is all for the female Gandhi who had snuffed out dissent and democracy—or whatever was there of it. It is for good reasons that the present ruling caucus patronises the Mahatma. It is time we called the bluff of Gandhism—hollow, hypocritical, and a positive

handicap to the natural growth of a mass movement in India which would have wrested freedom from the Britons. Congress under Gandhi-Nehru aborted that in the case of India in 1947; and another Congress and another Gandhi did the same in the case of Bangladesh.

O. Chakraborty  
Delhi

### Sub-culture

I dare not disagree with Mr Samir Mukherjee (4. 1. 75) that the present Government is bent upon destroying the morals of our youths in a planned way. Their object is clear — create a sub-culture that will emasculate the youths who have always been in the forefront of a popular upheaval against a corrupt administration. He has rightly observed that this can only happen under a system which is fast disintegrating under the pressure of its own contradictions and has totally outlived its utility.

The question however remains—Is our

deliverance from the ruthless system not far off?

Amiya Bhattacharjee  
Calcutta

### What To Do?

Girish Patel and Gautam Appa have embasized that our task should be to sensitise the masses about the futility of elections. Haven't the Gujarat agitation and Bihar stir exposed (or unexposed) the irrelevance of the election system! Do the masses, if left to themselves, believe in elections any more? Dalit Panthers in Bombay boycotted last year's by-election. It is not yet clear if that has strengthened their mass following and brought them closer to the people they represent.

Non-participation in elections is a form of protest which should be resorted to. But this is not going to reduce the power on the other side. They will be there, perhaps with less votes; their

power will be there, too. Any radical variety of Gandhian protest will not do. People need to be shown a correct revolutionary perspective which alone will help them arrive at a correct approach to elections and other political processes.

India lives in rural areas where semi-feudal conditions prevail. Power in the main lies in the countryside; it is also exercised ruthlessly at the least provocation. Counter-power is also there, but it is dormant and unorganised. It will be unproductive to ignore this. It is necessary to assess the counter-power, mobilise it and deploy against the feudal terror. Direct action and organisation of the people anywhere, needs to be done but it must be consistent with the revolutionary perspective.

Om Narayan  
Delhi

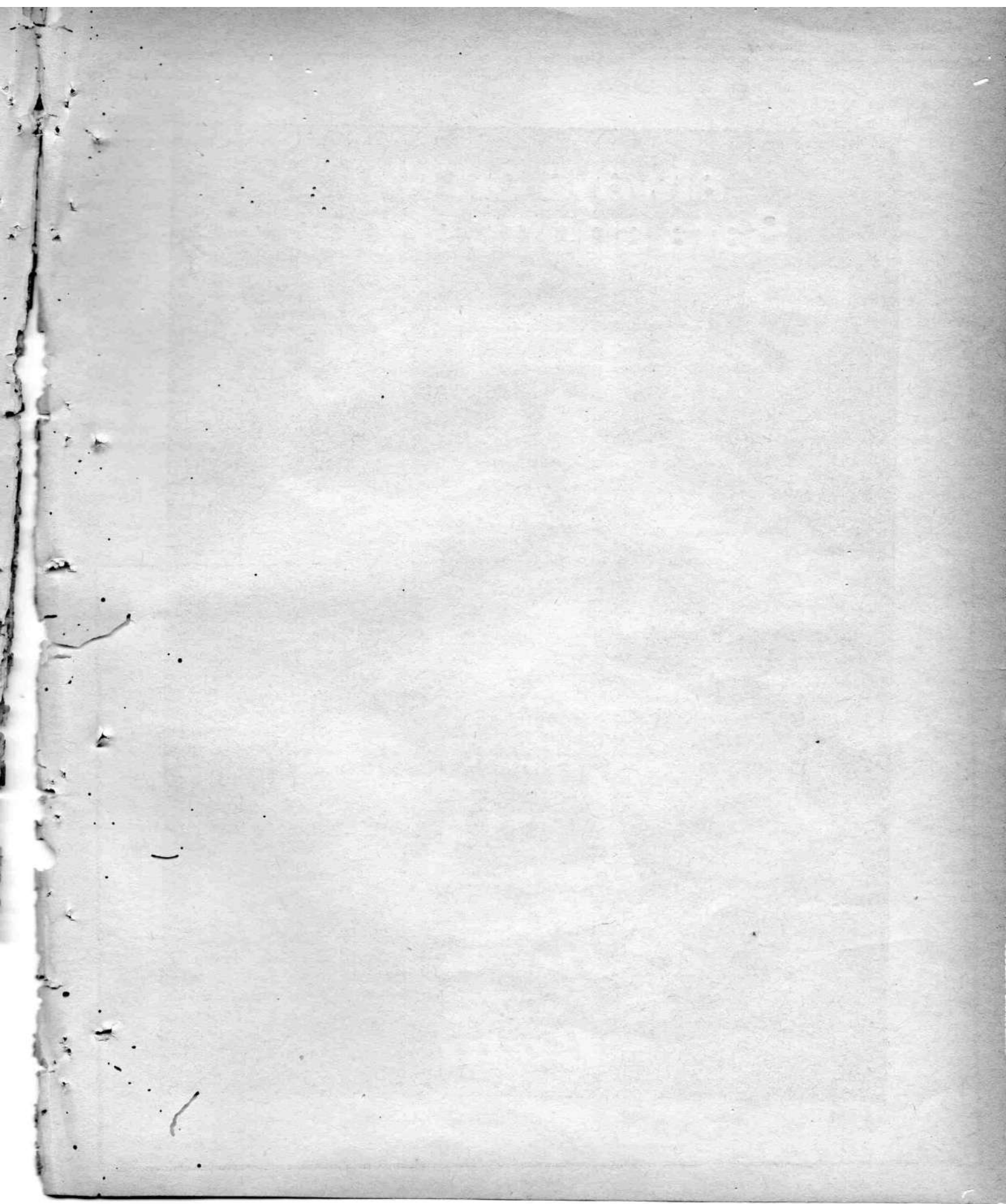
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