

frontier

Vol. 7: No. 52

MAY 3, 1975

PRICE: 50 PAISE

On Other Pages

- COMMENT ... 2
- THE TRIPURA STRIKE
FROM A CORRESPONDENT ... 3
- BETWEEN TWO STOOLS
FROM A CORRESPONDENT ... 4
- THE ARMY IN MIZORAM
BRIG. T. SAILO AVSM (RTD.) 6
- UNEQUAL EXCHANGE AND
THE CLASS ALIGNMENT IN
THE CAPITALIST WORLD
RANJIT SAU ... 9
- A DRAMA OF TERROR
BY A DRAMA CRITIC ... 12
- BRECHT IN BHOPAL
N. K. SINGH ... 13.
- LETTERS ... 14

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PRINTED AT MODERN INDIA PRESS,
7, RAJA SUBODH MULLICK SQUARE,
CALCUTTA-13 AND PUBLISHED WEEKLY
FOR GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS (P) LTD
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A DAY TO REMEMBER

SAIGON has fallen. The Government in Saigon, with American advice, made some last-minute manoeuvres: Thieu resigned, but his successor was his man. When these stupid tactics failed, the senators and deputies were compelled to choose General Duong Van Minh, who is known to favour peace and reconciliation; and he had to give up Saigon to the Provisional Revolutionary Government. Before the Paris accords were signed, after protracted negotiations, the PRG had insisted that Thieu must go, but the man stayed on, and with the borrowed arrogance of American power, played havoc with all the agreements signed in Paris, inflicting colossal suffering on the people. But patience, at that time misunderstood as a sign of weakness, has always marked the NLF and Hanoi, as it did the Chinese in their long march to victory. The NLF defended their territory against massive assaults by the Saigon forces and at the same time concentrated on political education and intensive training of cadres in Saigon-occupied territories. There was no attempt at premature uprisings in towns where the Saigon administration was strong. They waited for the right moment and when it came local guerillas, regional forces and the regular army acted in concert. The propaganda about massive intervention by North Vietnamese divisions is disproved by the fact that towns as far apart as 300 miles fell within 72 hours—the North Vietnamese or, for that matter—no army can achieve such mobility. The latest NLF campaign is a classic demonstration of a liberation war where the most decisive factor is an aroused people who know what they are living and dying for. This is one of the reasons why the Russians, who believe in 'liberation' by superpower arrangement, the supremacy of military might, and a peaceful road to socialism, are rather reserved about the events in Vietnam while China is so enthusiastic and so critical of the American aggressors. It is also clear now that the Nixon visit to China did not weaken the liberation forces in Indochina.

When Saigon was cut off and subject to rocket attacks and the mighty Bien Hoa air base was in danger, the men running the show in Saigon and their American advisers showed they were still capable of brutality and devious tactics. The use of asphyxiation bombs which suck hydrogen from the atmosphere leading people gasping to death was an instance of the savagery they are capable of. These bombs must have been flown from Thailand in the very recent past. But they will not prevent the Thieu men from choking to political death.

What sections of the American public have contributed to the victory of

the PRG should be noted: they have deprived the President of war-making powers, acquired, with the help of duplicity, after the Tonkin Gulf incident. The President cannot send his armed forces for actual combat in Indochina. But the Senate and the House of Representatives took a retrograde step by allowing the armed forces to help the evacuation of Americans and South Vietnamese. The Americans were forced to get out by Duong Van Minh. But it is the South Vietnamese political criminals intending to flee that might cause trouble. The U.S. Congress decision created a danger spot.

South Vietnam will be spread further agony the sooner a coalition government takes over Superhuman tasks will confront the coalition government. The PRG has already told several foreign governments about the immensity of the task of feeding and looking after the people in the liberated areas. It goes without saying that an organisation which has defeated the most vicious, the most powerful imperialism in history, after undergoing the greatest deluge of fire and steel ever known, will overcome the ordeal, with pride and self-respect.

Lenin's Men!

A correspondent writes:

The CPI General Secretary, Mr Rajeswara Rao (Order of Lenin and all that), has it seems, struck out a new concept of Marxian dialectics in outlining his party's latest programme for socialist revolution. At a recent Press conference in Calcutta, he declared that the countrywide demands for lifting the emergency, revoking MISA and restoration of civil liberties are inspired by reactionary and counter-revolutionary forces. They can therefore be no part of his party's political objective or tactical line. If anything, the CPI must begin by resisting these retrograde movements, and help the Government to tighten all undemocratic measures. It follows that continued emergency, provisions under MISA and various curbs on civil liberties are powerful instruments for effecting the Congress—

CPI brand of social revolution. The ideology(?) and practice of the Bangladesh dictator are already inspiring the CPI. Hasn't the World Peace Council—a Moscow-dominated body—decided to mobilise support for the Mujib charade? The CPI argument is that the undemocratic measures are directed against the forces of reaction. But the fact remains that the Government has been invoking all its enormous executive powers largely to stifle opposition of all varieties, including those trying to secure a better deal for the masses. Even assuring that the demands for restoration of civil liberties are organised by a reactionary clique headed by Mr Jayaprakash Narayan, it hardly follows that the demands in themselves are not justified. The Government wash its hands of the reeking corruption and bloody terror which its special powers have lent cover for. The very process of representative government and rule of law is grossly distorted, given the widespread rigging of elections and prolonged imprisonment of political offenders without trial. Treatment of prisoners under custody can match the brutalities in a Nazi concentration camp. It seems odd that, in the face of such a record of the use of arbitrary powers by the Government, the CPI should still try to keep up the myth that demands for their withdrawal are part of a reactionary movement. It says little for the intelligence and integrity—it any—of the party's theoreticians to adopt such an impossible stance.

Even more stultifying does the attitude become when one looks at the positive side of the Government's record with all its special executive powers. Except for a few arrests of smugglers, the powers have remained unused so far as the real reactionaries are concerned. Nothing could prove this more convincingly than the CPI's projected movement for enforcement of ceiling laws in respect of land holdings. What its ballyhoo about this more urgent socio-economic redress cannot hide, is the fact that the Government has been unable or unwilling to ensure it with all its powers under the emergency or MISA. If the ceiling laws about land holdings were applied, more than four

million acres of tillage land would have been available for distribution among the landless. Of these a mere 20,000 acres have so far been distributed. Do the big landlords, who are illegally holding the rest of the surplus land, all belong to the reactionary parties, or do they thrive under the patronage of the ruling party itself? At all events, they could not care less for the emergency or MISA; otherwise the CPI would not be obliged to envisage a struggle to recover and redistribute the surplus land. Not having much following in the countryside the CPI is obviously counting on the Congress volunteers to help its newly formed Red Guards in the task. But the kulaks are in no danger of losing their surplus possessions and seem unconcerned, since they know that both parties must go through the motions of this social revolution as part of a pre-election charade. Experience tells them that whenever such revolution begins in earnest the strong arm of the Government comes to their aid.

Ad-Hoc Committees

In the face of stiff resistance by an influential section of Congressmen against the reported highhandedness of Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi, the Congress Working Committee has decided to disband Pradesh Congress Committees of many States and set up ad-hoc committees. The decision, it is said, is meant to gear up the party's organisational machinery in those States where it is functioning ineffectively. But the real reason is to oust those Congressmen from the party who criticise the Congress High Command's policy of giving dictatorial powers to the party chief, Mrs Gandhi. The attempt of the Congress High Command to oust Mrs Gandhi's "critics" and give political patronage to her followers has created a rift in the party in the majority of the States and brought about in-fighting and factional quarrels. The party

is in a shambles in Gujarat. In West Bengal the PCC has never been a happy team. Its factions led by rival leaders, who between themselves have hired practically all the toughs in Calcutta, often fight pitched battles on the streets. In Assam, things are getting hot for the Chief Minister, Mr Sarat Sinha. In Mrs Gandhi's home State of Uttar Pradesh, the non-conformists, usually called dissidents, are asking for the ouster of the Chief Minister, Mr H. N. Bahuguna, who is said to her most trusted man. The Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr P. C. Sethi, never comfortable since he was installed by Mrs Gandhi, is facing rough weather. Party affairs are still in a fluid state in Maharashtra. Almost everywhere the organisational wing of the party is at loggerheads with the State Governments.

These dissensions at the lower level bring into bold relief the weakness of Mrs Gandhi's hold over the party organisation. The planned ad-hoc committees—a contrivance evolved years ago to curb open revolt against the leadership—are aimed at bootsteering her domination at the cost of democratic procedures written into the party constitution. Under the pattern of ad-hoc committees there will be no elected PCCs. The central party command, which means Mrs Gandhi herself, will fill these with men of its own choice, that is, men of unquestioned obedience to the Prime Minister.

The leadership of the Congress party is no more collective, but the hegemony of a single personality. This is how the self-proclaimed defenders of parliamentary democracy are protecting democracy inside their own party. Mrs Gandhi is out to make the Congress a sleeping organisation with the administration of a soporific—her own charisma. She needs the party as a democratic facade. She has been ruling mainly on the strength of the bureaucracy and the forces of law and order. The executive and the legislature, two of the three organs of a State, are under her domination. The third, the judiciary, is partly under her control. She needs the Congress party essentially for elections, but she would do away with elections if the prospects are not

hopeful, or she would use the emergency to win the poll by raising a scare of internal and external dangers which

she is already doing. A docile Congress party and a national emergency suit her nicely.

The Tripura Strike

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

NEARLY 30,000 State Government employees in Tripura went on strike from March 19 to 21 at the call of the CPM-dominated State Government Employees' Coordination Committee (SECC) and a faction of the ATEA backed by the former Chief Minister, Mr Sachindra Lal Singh. It was a total strike which brought the entire Administration to a halt. The private and semi-government institutions also ceased to function. The broad masses of people rallied behind the striking employees in larger numbers than ever before and demonstrated their militant solidarity through massive processions, squattings and meetings which shook the entire State for full two weeks. Even womenfolk from the rural areas joined processions carrying their babies in arms, shouting slogans against the ruling classes. The State police personnel were stripped of their arms and withdrawn the moment the administration came to realise that the police also had more to share with the surging masses than to work as unthinking machines. In some cases even CRP personnel were also withdrawn when they were caught jeering at the handful of non-striking employees and greeting them with such epithets as 'beimans', and were subsequently replaced by some other para-military forces. Though lakhs of rupees were spent by the Government on hired goondas and ruffians to break the strike they hardly dared to move out because they had not only to face the employees but also the people who stood solidly behind them. It was indeed a strike with a difference.

When the strike had gained further momentum and the rank and file appeared morally committed to continuing it for a further indefinite period, the Action Council of the SECC decided to call it off from April 1 following an

'assurance' from the twenty-two dissident members of the Congress Legislature Party. Since the SECC leaders were supposed to be underground, the Secretary of the All India State Government Employees Confederation who also happens to be a prominent leader of the State Employees in West Bengal, announced the decision before a few thousand stupefied employees and workers. The consideration which prompted the Action Council to call off the strike was that the twenty-two dissident Congressmen had come out with the assurance that they would prevail upon the Chief Minister to effect release of the employees detained under MISA, and that they would keep constant vigil against further victimisation of the employees so that an atmosphere favourable for opening a dialogue with employees' representatives was created. The Action Council, we were told, could not ignore these assurances because refusal would have provided the Government scope to accuse the employees of intransigence, especially when public life was going to be totally paralysed by this strike. Second, if the Action Council kept insisting on the release of the arrested employees as a precondition for ending the strike, the unity forged with the followers of the dissident Congressmen both in and outside the Assembly House would crack and result in the former's isolation from the masses as mischief-mongers. In that event the Government would seize the opportunity to come down heavily on the striking employees with all the means of repression at its command, ultimately paving the way to the automatic collapse of the strike.

The wise man from West Bengal gracefully asked the employees not to think that the 13-day-old strike had failed. It was no mean achievement, he averred, that the strik-

ing employees in Tripura were able to draw support and sympathy from a larger section of the ruling Congressmen for the first time in the annals of anti-ruling class struggles since 1947, leading to a serious crisis in the party. Lastly, he reminded the employees that since the struggle they had launched was the first of its kind in Tripura they should gain further experience through similar struggles in future so as to realise that no struggle can go on without peasant and worker participation.

In fact, the decision to go on strike from March 19 was taken by the SECC leaders on a secret understanding that the anti-Sengupta clique would come out en masse in support of the striking employees. Hectic preparations were also carried on to that end at both the levels. The appearance of Mr Sachindra Lal Singh, now a disgruntled Congressman, on the scene further bolstered their strength. Not only did he act as a force behind the twenty-two Congressmen but also went on voicing his support for the demands of the employees at various public meetings in the State. Tired of shadowboxing for a long time, the dissidents thought the strike issue would serve as a handy weapon to sharpen the infighting and force a showdown against Mr Sukhamoy Sengupta, the Chief Minister. With the strike going on, they mounted heavy pressure on him to initiate a dialogue with the employees' representatives. At the same time they sent lightning messages to the Prime Minister and the Congress High Command holding Mr Sengupta responsible for the situation and alleging that he had forfeited their faith as leader of the State CLP. This was further followed by a total Tripura bandh on March 25 and a massive demonstration held by more than 10,000 people in front of the Assembly House on March 26, demanding immediate fulfilment of the charter of demands placed by the employees. Despite all this, it was not possible to budge the Chief Minister even an inch from the position taken by him that he would open dialogue with the employees' representatives only after the strike was called off.

As wild speculation became rife that the Ministry headed by Mr Sengupta was going to fall in no time over the strike issue unless he evolved a compromise formula acceptable to the employees, Mr Sengupta's efforts were to prove that so long as he had the backing of the Prime Minister there was no power on earth which could dislodge him. The dissident legislators' concerted manoeuvrings were hardly any match for the elderly politician's genius for mischief. He knew it quite well that if he yielded to the pressure of the dissidents that would for certain deflate his stature as the Prime Minister's most trusted lieutenant in the State politics and hasten his doom, especially when the recalcitrant Congressmen were pressing an issue backed by the CPM. So he announced through a radio broadcast grant of interim D.A. for the State employees without of course specifically mentioning the strike.

In the situation the SECC leadership's predicament was quite understandable. It had practically no independent role to play in the conduct of the whole movement and on tactical question the faction led by Mr Sachindra Lal Singh mostly prevailed. Worst of all, the dissident Congressmen, on the other hand, started losing ground for further manoeuvrability as they were under heavy pressure from the Congress High Command to resolve their 'petty' differences with the Chief Minister. Finally, when it appeared quite certain that the Chief Minister was poised for a serious confrontation with the striking employees, the only option open to the SECC leadership was to manipulate a compromise with the help of the dissidents as a face-saving device. The so-called assurances that came from the dissidents was the result of this exercise. This lapse into a surrender virtually helped the Chief Minister to stand on firmer ground.

It can be safely said that the SECC, a stronghold of the CPM, has lost a war which they did not mean to wage against the ruling cliques. The 13-day strike provided a long period for the followers of the dissident Congressmen and those of the redoubtable Sachin

Singh to penetrate deep into the portals of the SECC fortress and to discover where it was vulnerable. Especially for Mr Sachin Singh, it would not be much difficult to extend areas of his political influence and find ready-made fields to work on now that he has emerged as a friend of the struggling masses. Considering the stuff he is made of, he is likely to have new themes to harp on even if that means going against both the present ruling Congress and the SECC since he was not directly a party to the goings on that brought the 13-day-old strike to an end. It would not be much difficult for Mr Sengupta either to have the allegations levelled against him by the dissident Congressmen withdrawn before he is expected to implement their so-called assurances to the employees. What if the assurances which have no substance are not at all honoured? Is the SECC strong enough to give a call for another strike all on its own? The dissident Congressmen have already managed to forget their 'historic' assurances but have not forgotten the people who supported the employees. Now they have turned their attention to pleading the case of the people dying of starvation and virulent diseases. There has been no vacation of victimisation since the strike was called off; on the contrary, the Government is going in for more. The CPM MLAs including the opposition leaders who were arrested in the wake of the strike have since been released, but the SECC activists detained under MISA continued to rot in jails as ordinary criminals.

As usual, the demands which led the employees to go on strike have all been pushed into the background and alternated by demands for release of the prisoners and no-victimisation. This is what has been exactly happening over and over again under the same old leadership. It was not the demands of the slogans which kept the strike going on for thirteen days. Nor was it the response the strike call received even in the interior villages where a school teacher or a vaccinator works. It was the people's hatred of the ruling classes that brought them out on the streets. They unwittingly read in the movement

launched by the employees a determination to bring about a change for the better. The leadership by its unblushing opportunism has once again proved that it will never let a mass movement develop into a political struggle unless that holds out promise for parliamentary gains.

Between Two Stools

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

WHILE the Tripura Pradesh Congress is splitting into two sharp divisions just for powermongerism, the only Left legislative party, the CPI(M), is swinging between the dissident Congress and the Upajati Congress which maintains its separate entity of sectarianism. One of the top leaders of the CPI(M) who is a tribal and a veteran parliamentarian is adding fuel to the communal frenzy among the tribals and non-tribals. The tribal Jhumias (jhum cultivator) are being instigated against non-tribal peasants by the leaders of the Upajati Parishad and the "Marxist" leader devotes all his energies today to the organisational building of the Upajati Parishad in the rural areas where tribal unrest is causing grave concern to the Government. The CPI(M), from another angle, views this tribal upsurge with much concern; it fears that it may turn into violent armed struggle as in Mizoland—the Mizos are also alleged to be in "collusion" with the fighting Tripuris. That the tradition of armed struggle by the Riang tribals in 1946-47 has not yet faded from the minds of those downtrodden was again proved in the later part of 1973 at Raimasarma (a place near Dumbur falls) when the enraged tribals challenged with arms the ruthless military operation after the police had failed to evict the Jhumias from land. In the Lushai Hills close to the Jampui hills on the Tripura-Mizoram border the possibility of armed struggle by the Tripura tribals cannot be ruled out; the situation has been excellent for a greater struggle for liberation. The 'Marxist' leaders have been active in countering the

Raima struggle through the Upajati Parishad and are now trying to turn the struggle of the poor Jhumias into communal channels. Some incidents are reported in the local press.

The Upajati Parishad with its headquarters at Agartala is expanding among the rich and middle gentry of the town, and landlords and moneylenders in the rural areas. The careerist tribal youths are attracted by the Parishad. The organisation at the very outset raised some popular demands—land to the landless tribals, 'Kokbork' language as medium of instruction etc. The organisation is now based mainly on the demands for an autonomous district council within the framework of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution and land reform i.e. land not to be transferred to the non-tribals. Introduction of such land reforms is a pledge by the Upajati leaders to the poor landless tribals who are thereby given the scope to seize land through a sectarian outlook. Most of the tribal land was forcibly taken over by the Government for the purpose of afforestation, rubber plantation, horticulture, coffee plantation etc. After the introduction of the Tripura Land Reforms Act 1960, the jotedari and mahajani system was firmly established in Tripura (prior to 1960 it was in the womb of tribal feudalism, and as a result a good number of both plains and tribals became landless. On the other hand Government eviction is still going on. The Upajati Parishad does not have any mandate to return to the landless Jhumias their lost land from unauthorised occupants. Rather the Parishad leaders have secretly helped the Government in the eviction drive. The jhumias are being made to believe that their ancestral lands are in the hands of non-tribal peasants. Of course there are non-tribal landlords and mahajans even in the tribal belt, but they are not identified as the enemy to the poor Jhumias by the Parishad. This is not surprising because the Parishad is financed partly by these mahajans and landlords. The Congress, the CPI and the CPI(M) are seeking an alliance to arouse communal feelings among the tribals as well as non-tribals whenever

there is a possibility of class struggle in rural Tripura.

Culturally and morally degenerated tribal youths are being bought by the Government and the Baptist missionaries who have already intruded into Tripura. Large amounts of money from both Church and State are being spent on wine and brothels for these young upstarts most of whom are already members of the Parishad. The unemployed young members are given the promise of employment as and when the chartered demands are fulfilled.

The Upajati Parishad is now losing its mass base because of its communal performance. Its main elements are petty-bourgeois opportunists and social upstarts from the 'Karta' clan who were once close to the King in his evil deeds. In the rural areas where the broad masses of the tribals could have been the basic force of the Parishad, all political leaders including the CPI(M) have been exposed during the past two years; the tribals now do not respond even to the call of the CPI(M). In reality the CPI(M) has lost its base among the tribals and now stands for the employees, so long as they can be led by economism on innocuous programmes. CPI(M) activists recruited from the tribals can hardly win the hearts of the poor tribal peasants who fell helpless victims to the Government's extensive procurement drive with the help of the CPI(M) leaders last year. Under the cover of procurement the jotedars and mahajans were let loose to oppress the poor and middle peasants.

This time Tripura is hit by a terrible drought and the moneylenders, with Government licences, are storing Boro crops. The result is total famine in rural areas; the drought, blamed for such an ordeal, is a godsend for the profiteers.

The struggle for seizure of crops by the peasants is going on, with the CPI(M) unable to give leadership. The performance of the fighting peasants at present is in sharp contrast with that of faltering, equivocal leadership. They are fighting against tremendous odds and looking for correct leadership which can sustain their struggle till victory.

The Army In Mizoram

BRIG. T. SAILO AVSM (Rtd)*

During the years 1966-73 when I was serving the Indian Army many instances of atrocity, misbehaviour of the Security Forces towards the people of Mizoram came to my notice through local newspapers, public conversation and through private letters. In short, the image of the Indian Army has reached its bottom so far as the general public in Mizoram are concerned. This has personally affected me and caused agony to my feelings because of the fact that I am basically a Mizo and at the same time I have been a soldier of the Indian Army for over thirty years. Mizo is in my blood and the Indian Army is in my flesh and bones.

On my retirement from the army in 1974 I decided to come to Mizoram and see things for myself. In the course of my meetings with the various sections of the people the same sorry tales of the excesses committed by the Security Forces on the general population of Mizoram have been repeated time and again during conversation, through newspapers and again private letters. I find the people in general utterly disgusted with the Indian soldiers. They are bitter to the extreme towards the Security Forces. In almost all the villages, what the villagers see and know of India is the Security Forces stationed on duty in that particular village. It is no wonder, therefore, that the people have been so much antagonised against and alienated from India. To a villager an Indian soldier is India. He has not seen India except this Indian soldier. Therefore, who can represent India to the people of Mizoram but the Security Forces?

What an irony of fate that has come about in Mizoram! I remember before 1966 the Mizo people respected and admired the soldiers. Hundreds of young Mizos wanted to join the Indian Army. Today the position has been reversed altogether. As a matter of fact

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even today a few odd cases either of individual soldiers or of Regiments, who have behaved well are talked about with respect. As an example, a battalion of 3rd Gurkha operating in South Mizoram (in 1967, 1968, 1969?) are still remembered and talked about with respect and appreciation. People mentioned with pleasure and eagerness some individual officers who have done their duties correctly. If there is an encounter between the Security Forces and the MNF and if the latter suffered serious casualties, the local public understand that and talk no more about it. However, they cannot help talking about atrocities and ill-treatment inflicted on the innocent public.

Let us say there is an encounter at Point X 5 miles from village A. After the encounter the Security Forces either burn down village A or beat up the male members of that village or the first group of civilians whom they meet after the encounter at Point X. What logic! This instance can be multiplied by the score. It had happened so many times. In many an encounter or ambush the Security Forces have rarely been able to punish or arrest the real MNF soldiers. But almost invariably they have punished the innocent public nearest to the place of encounter ambush.

The Security Forces have also grossly abused the special power given to them, namely, arresting a person on suspicion. In many cases they would wrongfully detain such persons for a long period of time and torture them. Sometimes they use this method as a weapon of intimidation. If a villager reports to higher civil authorities against the wrong-doing of the Security Forces in his village, the latter will arrest him and threaten him with dire consequences.

Another instance of bitterness against the Security Forces is occasioned by their utter disrespect to the church congregation. The Security Forces suspect some MNF or their agents being present in the church congregation on a Sunday. They would come and drive the congregation out of the church in a most vulgar manner and herd them together in the open ground outside for a long period in spite of rain or sun-

shine. What a cruel and foolish way of doing things!

It must be accepted that the present trouble in Mizoram is not a military problem. It is a political problem and consequently a human problem—a battle for the hearts. The most ruthless measures were adopted in 1966-67, namely, wholesale evacuation of villages to the so-called grouping centres, reminiscent of a concentration camp. The Security Forces have tried to intimidate the public with all manner of atrocities and ill-treatment. However, this strong-arm method has not brought about any solution. On the contrary, it has only engendered bitterness and hatred against the Security Forces and consequently, India. If, on the other hand, the soldiers had done their duties correctly the political situation in Mizoram would have been different today. If a Mizo, who has nothing to do with the MNF, speaks the truth and talks about the atrocities and excesses of the Security Forces, he is regarded as an MNF sympathiser and taken as suspect by the civil authorities and the Indian Army here in Mizoram. This cannot be called wisdom.

I feel that I have a role to play towards restoring goodwill, mutual understanding and cooperation between the Security Forces and the Mizo public. With the help of friends the Human Rights Committee has been organised towards this end.

The Human Rights Committee has started on a programme of public education as to where the soldier's duty lies and how the public should cooperate within the bounds of law. The Committee will also encourage the villagers to report truthfully without exaggeration any incident of misbehaviour of the Security Forces to the highest authorities in India. In sum, the Committee wishes that the public of India should be taken into confidence so that they should know the true state of affairs in Mizoram.

The Committee has collected about 36 concrete cases giving details of atrocity/misbehaviour committed by the Security Forces. These cases are attached as annexure I-36. These are concrete cases giving specific dates, times of occurrence, the names of the culprits.

MAY 3, 1975

addresses. These 36 annexures represent only a fraction of several hundreds of cases which had happened since 1966.

The Committee recommends to the Prime Minister that a judicial commission of enquiry consisting of retired High Court judges should be instituted to verify the truth contained in these 36 annexures. Given suitable transport to move about it will not take more than a month to complete the task of verification. Or else, a parliamentary delegation including Opposition MP's can be entrusted with the task of verification.

Selected Cases

Mr R. Raltawna, editor of *Zodin*, a daily, complains to the Prime Minister that on August 29-31, 1974, Assam Rifles arrested him for publishing reports of MNF activities and misbehaviour by Security Forces and of the case of murder of one Mr Chhawnvela. The Security Forces charged him with having something to do in connection with this murder case, possibly abetment. He was confined in a small dirty room for two days. His hands were tied at his back, his legs were also tied up and his eyes were blindfolded throughout this period. He was given no bedding for the night. He was given no food, nor water. No arrangement was made for urinating, nor had to urinate in the same place where he was confined. He protested to Capt. Thapa, 19 Assam Rifles, who came to interrogate him, about the inhuman way of his confinement. He replied, "All you Mizos are dirty scoundrels, like dogs, monkeys and such. We treated all our prisoners like we do to you. So, why complain?"

On August 31, in the morning he was loaded like a bundle of goods in an open vehicle, hands and legs the blissfolded and was thus carried in this condition, for the whole day and until Mizawl was reached in the evening, when he was given over to the Civil Police.

Mr Raltawna says in his complaint that Indian soldiers had meted out the same type of treatment to thousands of Mizos — both MNF and non-MNF. "I will not forget this inhuman beha-

viour of your soldiers. Please understand that it is this type of humiliating treatment and torture that has driven thousands of our young men to desperation. I also know that others have suffered far more cruel treatment, too ghastly to describe".

Mr Lungkhama of Ngopa village writes to the Prime Minister that as a result of the torture inflicted on him, when he said he did not know anything about the MNF, by Capt. S. D. S. (the name is given in the document as are the names of those involved in other cases) of 18 Rajput on May 9-15, 1974, he has lost his power of manhood, i.e. he is an incapable of having a marital life; he cannot hear with his left ears, he suffers from extreme giddiness, he cannot move about; he has extreme pain in the right chest and right side.

Mr Rohmingthanga, of village Zawlpui Veng, P.O. Lokhicherra, writes: "My son, Rosangliana, joined the Mizo underground army against my desire some years ago. On 2nd May, 1974, there was an encounter between the MNF and the Security Forces (19 Maratha) at 1-30 p.m. near (a) village called Sarapa (Tui-kuk). During the encounter, my son was wounded, a bullet having hit him in the spinal chord, he fell down at once. When the Indian soldiers came near him, they asked him to stand up. When he could not do so because of the wound the soldiers kicked him a number of times. They plugged his one ear and slapped him on the other resulting in blood oozing out and causing deafness. They also tortured him in such a way as to smash his heels into pieces. From the scene of encounter my son was carried to a village called Rengdil, employing the locals to do the carriage. The soldiers tied his legs and his wrists, passed a big bamboo in between the arms and the legs and made the locals carry him like a dead animal, his body hanging beneath the bamboo which rested on the shoulder of the carriers. How cruel it was. A human being treated like a dead animal.

"They brought my son to Rengdil around 7-30 p.m. the same day. Although he was unable to move at all being so seriously wounded, the soldiers

tied his arms at the back, the elbows touching each other. This was witnessed by the Village Council President and the Administrative Officer called Zangenga. When the latter pointed out to the soldiers that their prisoner was too cruelly treated, the soldiers replied, "Nothing can be too cruel to an enemy".

"My son was kept by the soldiers at Rengdil camp without any medical attention for 2-1/2 days.

"... My son eventually died on 17th August, '74 (in the Aizawl Civil Hospital).

Wedding & Curfew

At Kawnpui during May 1974 there was a wedding. Since a curfew was on the religious rites were being performed inside the house of the bridegroom, Mr Ngurthanmawia, CRP personnel came and disturbed the ceremony on the plea that there was curfew. They went inside and mercilessly beat up men and women, kicking them with their boots, hitting them with their rifles and causing injuries. This thing happened in spite of the pleading by the Administrative Officer.

On Sunday afternoon (21st April, '74) at Kawkulh, there was a Games Association Committee held in a house. 2nd Lt. Sharma of 18 Rajput with ten soldiers came to the meeting. They took the committee members to the military camp and detained them there. Here, one Major A.C.C. of the same Unit asked the committee members to tell him who had put up MNF, posters/letters in the village. The members, said they could not give any clue. On that Maj. A.C.C. started torturing them using various methods. They twisted the arm of Mr Lalthenlova so much that there was a dislocation of the bone. He is even now disabled. At night they were kept in the Unit Quarter-Guard and made to sleep without food and clothes. During the night they were again tortured in the way now well known in the land. On the following day they were released.

Rape

A married woman, Mrs Thanghuni, W/o Liankila, was staying with her old mother-in-law. A number of soldiers came to the house, three went inside

FRONTIER

and raped Thanghuni (on June 5, 1967. The soldiers were under Company Commander O.P.S.).

At village Sjalsuk, on January 27, '68, Major S. of 17 Rajput along with soldiers entered the house of Mrs Hrangluti and questioned her as to the whereabouts of Mr Lalzuliana S/o Darkhama. As she could not give the required answer the Major took out a bayonet from one of the soldiers and pierced the foot of the woman. It almost went through.

9 Killed

In June 1967, Village Hnahchang was set on fire and completely burnt down by 3rd Bn. Bihar Regt. The villagers scattered all over, some went to the nearby jungle and erected sheds out of tree leaves. Maj. B. and his soldiers (3rd Bihar) came to these sheds and drove the inmates outside, made them sit in a line and shot them dead. Nine were killed, four wounded. Among the killed was a girl three years old carried by her sister sitting by the side of their mother. An 80-year-old man and a woman of 67 years and another woman of 42 years were among the killed. All the dead bodies were kept inside the sheds and set on fire. This episode will never be forgotten in the history of Mizoram.

Name of the dead: Shri Hualhnuna (80 yrs), Smt. Laidengi (67), Shri Lalruata (46), Shri Ronghinga (42), Smt. Chhuanthangi (42), Shri Lalmachhuana (19), Shri Kaphranga (31), Shri Kaptawna (24), Smt. Aithangi (3).

On January 13, 1967, 'B' Wing, 1st Assam Rifles under Capt. H. S.G. collected a few innocent people (non-MNF) of village Buang and tortured them. Out of them, 4 were so seriously injured that they could not walk at all. The Captain and his party proceeded to Kelkang village; they engaged the locals of Buang to carry the 4 seriously injured persons. They spent the night in Kelkang. The next morning, the party left Kelkang. They engaged some porters to carry their luggage as well as the 4 seriously wounded persons.

It was about mid-day when they reached within 1-1/2 miles of Champ-hai. At this time there was some

firing, presumably from the MNF. At once all the soldiers and the porters halted and lay down on the ground taking cover along the side of the raised, "bund" (this place being flat land of wet cultivation). The firing stopped after a few seconds, Capt. G. then shot dead with his own sten-gun 17 porters who were lying down along the side of the "bund".

At village Dulte, Mr Haulera and others were making a roof for a house. Indian soldiers arrived and ordered all male members to collect together, after which they tied them up. Then the soldiers started to search all the houses. They looted everything they could find. Mr Haulera was robbed of Rs 8,000 and other merchandise. His one pig and eight chickens were also eaten by the soldiers.

Mr Lalchungle, from village Chhawrtui, an ex-chieftain, was living a quiet life. The Security Forces (under Captain S. of 2/11 Gr.) one day took him to their camp and asked him the where about of the MNF camp and their arms dump. He told them that he did not know anything about it. He was then tortured and finally shot dead. He left behind an old mother, wife and three children now destitute and pauper.

On July 20, 1967, at a place a little away from village Ngopa, Indian soldiers were ambushed by the MNF. After the MNF had run away the soldiers (under Capt. A.N.K. 1st Bn. Assam Rifles) came to village Ngopa. They bombarded the whole village with 2-inch mortar. Then they asked the villagers to congregate in the Church. They picked up three men and shot them in cold blood in front of the public just to teach a lesson to the villagers. Out of the three men shot dead, Mr Vungzakama was to proceed for theological training and was waiting for a movement permit to be given by the officer-in-charge of the soldiers.

Copy of a Letter to Mrs Gandhi

Brigadier T. Sailo, AVSM (Retd),
'Ahimsa' Cabin,
Chhingga Veng,
P.O. Aizawl,

Dated Aizawl, 16-10-1974.

Respected Prime Minister,

Since my retirement early this year and my return to Mizoram, I have been increasingly depressed and perturbed as a soldier with 31 years of service at the reputation, the Indian Army, in which I still feel so proud to have served, has now achieved in my home State. I think, Madam, that my record of service and my decoration will speak for themselves. I am not given to irresponsible or emotionally hasty judgments, nor to magnifying an occasional unfortunate incident into a general complex of bitterness. Some years ago when there was indiscipline amounting to mutiny among troops from my own home State and Regiment I was the first to deprecate leniency, and my reputation over this incident is known in the Army. I am not squeamish about the inevitable casualties that occur in combat with the underground hostiles, and can quote Units who have inflicted such casualties effectively and yet retained the respect and even friendship of ordinary villagers.

But the feelings of the entire village population of Mizoram are now totally alienated by what amounts to the denial of all decencies of human rights; and any picture which you may have had painted to you to the contrary, is false.

Something has to be done to bridge the gulf and restore confidence. Hence the Committee which we have formed in Mizoram. We had considered various approaches—to Members of Parliament, the Press and to prominent citizens of our country. But we preferred to by-pass anything savouring of a destructive or agitational approach, and to appeal instead to your impartiality and understanding to ascertain the true state of affairs and to rectify it.

We do not seek any vindictive punishments—merely that justice and decency be restored and the fear of terror, torture and oppression be lifted from the hearts of our people.

I would welcome an opportunity of calling on you personally at any convenient time or place to apprise you of any details or clarifications.

Yours sincerely,
T. Sailo,
Brig. Retd.

MAY 3, 1975

Unequal Exchange and the Class Alignment in the Capitalist World

RANJIT SAU

IN the capitalist system of the world, the countries such as the United States, Britain, France, Germany and Japan constitute the so-called 'centre'; and the non-socialist countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, the 'periphery'. A massive amount of surplus value is being drained away every year from the periphery-countries in the form of profit on foreign capital. In addition, a much larger volume of value is transferred from the periphery to the centre through the mechanism of **unequal exchange** in international trade; this flow is not that visible, but it has a profound bearing upon the relationship among the workers of the world. The proletariat and the bourgeoisie of the centre-countries are the co-beneficiaries of the plunder of the periphery through unequal exchange; and their opposite numbers in the periphery-countries are the joint victims. Under such circumstances, the slogan for proletarian internationalism sounds empty. For, why should the workers of the world unite, in that case? The workers of the centre-countries would rather join hands with their bourgeoisie in protection of the economic bonanza flowing from the unequal exchange. And, in the periphery-countries, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie would forge solidarity among themselves in their struggle for national economic liberation. The unequal exchange in international trade therefore draws the battle line that cuts across the classes of the world.

This view is now current in a circle of academic theoreticians. Because of its far-reaching implications with regard to the theory and practice of class struggle the above thesis should be subjected to a scientific examination. Its true kernel is to be accepted; and the shell, which is misleading, thrown away.

Three Approaches and One Mistake

The credit for first pointing out the phenomenon of unequal exchange in

trade among capitalist countries goes to Emmanuel¹. His analysis draws upon the Marxian law of value. The value of a commodity produced under capitalist conditions consists of three components. The first one, which merely represents the value of the materials and machinery used up in the process of production, is called 'constant capital', usually denoted by the letter *c*. The second part is known as the 'variable capital' which is essentially the wage bill; it is represented by the letter *v*. The third part is the surplus value itself which is designated by *s*. In this notation, the value of a commodity = $c + v + s$.

The price of a commodity also has three components, *c*, *v* and *p*, where *p* is profit. If the rate of profit is 20 per cent, then the price of a commodity = $c + v + 0.20(c + v)$. The transformation of values of a set of commodities into their respective prices is a complicated exercise. At any rate, let it be noted that in the Marxian schema the price of a commodity may numerically differ from its value; but the **total value** of all the commodities in an integrated economy is equal to their **total price**, irrespective of the magnitude of the profit rate. Likewise, the **total surplus value** is equal to the **total profit**².

Emmanuel considers two capitalist countries, A and B, the former being the centre and the latter the periphery. Labour power is assumed to be homogeneous and comparable across the countries. To begin with, there is no international trade. The economy of A operates with a profit rate of 20 per cent; that of B with 33.33 per cent. The total value—hence, total price—in economy A is, say, 360 units of labour power; that in B, 240 units. Should one unit of the average commodity of A be exchanged for $360/240=1.5$ units of the average commodity produced in B, that would be an instance of 'equal exchange'. Because one unit of the

former commodity and 1.5 units of the latter contain equal amounts of labour power, 360 being 1.5 times 240.

These two economies now come into contact through international trade. By assumption—and this is an important assumption—only one profit rate would prevail in both the countries. Let the profit rate accordingly settle somewhere in between 20 per cent and 33.33 per cent. Suppose it is 25 per cent. The total value in A and B together still remains $360+240=600$ as before; so does their combined, total price. But in individual countries the total price would diverge from the total value. The total price of goods in A, goes up; and that in B goes down. For, the profit rate in A has risen, being 25 per cent as against 20 per cent previously; so its commodities would enjoy higher prices. By contrast, in B the profit rate has suffered a decline from 33.33 per cent to 25 per cent; hence its commodities will have lower prices. As a result, one unit of the average commodity produced in A will be exchanged for **more than 1.5 units** of the average commodity produced in B, even though their respective values have not been affected in any way. This is an example of unequal exchange: one unit of labour power of A having been sold at more than the same amount of labour power of B. Thus when the capitalist economies are integrated through international trade, leading to the prevalence of a uniform profit rate throughout, an inequality in exchange sets in. The basic reason for this event lies in the difference in the organic composition of capital ($c/c+v$) in the two countries.

Lower Wage Rate

Emmanuel in fact goes one step further. He postulates that the wage rate in the periphery-country B is lower. Referring again to the above example, suppose the wage rate in B is reduced

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by half. Then variable capital v in that country would proportionately drop. We know that $\text{price} = (c + v) (1 + \text{profit rate})$. Hence, the price of the commodity of B undergoes a corresponding decline. That is to say, the degree of inequality in the unequal exchange between A and B gets aggravated all the more. The lower wage rate in the periphery-countries is identified by Emmanuel as the root cause of unequal exchange in international trade between the centre and the periphery of the world capitalist system.

The second approach, that of Braun³, relies upon the analytical model of Sraffa⁴. It should be mentioned at the outset that Braun's concept of unequal exchange is very much different from Emmanuel's as we shall see below.

Braun sets up a model of price formation after Sraffa, and draws the following four conclusions:

- (i) In the integrated economies of A and B, the profit rate and the wage rate are inversely related; that is, if one rises the other falls, and vice versa.
- (ii) By assumption, the profit rate is uniform in both the countries; but the wage rates may be different. Now, with a given profit rate ruling in A and B, the wage rates of the two countries are inversely related. The reason is that once a certain profit rate is fixed the weighted average of the wage rates of A and B are also immediately determined by virtue of proposition (1). Hence, should the wage rate in country A rise then that in country B must fall so as to maintain the predetermined weighted average. Note that herein lies the germ of conflict of interests between the workers of the centre and the periphery.
- (iii) The wage rate of one country being given, the wage rate of the other country and the profit rate are also inversely related. This is simply a corollary of the preceding theorems.
- (iv) If the wage rate in a country rises or falls, other things remaining the same, the price of the commodity produced there

would also move in the same direction, and vice versa.

Recall that Emmanuel begins with the postulate that the wage rate in B is lower, and then he proceeds to explain the unequal exchange in world trade. Braun, however, starts from the other end. He claims that the centre-countries, exercising their monopoly over world market, keep down the prices of goods exported by B. Hence arises the unequal exchange. What are its consequences? In view of proposition (iv) above, this leads to a lower wage rate in country B. Furthermore, referring to proposition (ii) it is found that as the wage rate in A improves the income of the workers in B keeps on falling.

Unlike Emmanuel, Braun does not clarify why the exchange is deemed as unequal, and in what sense. What he provides is rather a formal explanation of the deteriorating terms of trade of the periphery-countries, accompanied by rising wages in the centre and falling wages in the periphery.

The third approach, that of Saigal⁵, is closer in form and content to Braun's than to Emmanuel's. The essence of it can be appreciated if one of the several illustrative examples of Saigal is discussed.

Countries A and B have the same technologies to produce two goods, namely, steel and corn. Corn is the numeraire for the price of steel and for wage rates. The wage rate in A is four times of that in B. The profit rate becomes equalised in the two countries under international trade; but the wage differential persists. Saigal

for example postulates a standardised technology, and on that basis he works out the following results. In the case of no specialisation and no trade, that is, when each country produces both the goods it needs (case 1 in the Table), the profit rate in B is 173 per cent and the domestic price of steel is 1.83 units of corn. Alternatively, if B specialises in the production of steel (case 2), the profit rate drops to 140 per cent, and the price of steel which B sells to A in exchange of corn goes down to 0.83. Should it specialise in corn instead (case 3), the profit rate dips still farther to 114 per cent, and the price of steel which now B buys from A shoots up to 2.33. Either way, B is a net loser in such international trade and A is a net gainer, as a comparison of cases 2 and 3 with case 1 would reveal. Saigal calls it unequal exchange, to the detriment of B interests.

Yes; it is an unequal exchange, in favour of A and against B, provided the international trade occurs at all. But it is quite clear that the trade will not happen in the first place. The capitalists in B would realise that by engaging in trade with A they invite a decline in their own profit—from 173 per cent to either 140 per cent or 114 per cent depending upon the course of specialisation. Nowhere in the world capitalists are prone to such partial self-immolation. The same comment applies to all the three approaches outlined above. Why should the capitalists of Emmanuel's country B volunteer for international trade as a result of which their profit rate comes down from 33.33 per cent to 25 per cent? Braun's

TABLE

Alternative situations	Country	Profit rate %	Price of steel
Case 1. Each country produces both corn and steel ..	A	50	1.33
	B	173	1.83
Case 2. A produces and exports corn; B, steel ..	A	140	0.83
	B	140	0.83
Case 3. A produces and exports steel; B, corn ..	A	114	2.33
	B	114	2.33

Sraffa-model also cannot answer this simple but fundamental question. Emmanuel, Braun and Saigal, all three in their enthusiasm to demonstrate the phenomenon of unequal exchange have forgotten the basic characteristics of the capitalist class⁶. And one mistake has led them to another: their formulation of the class alignment in the world capitalist system, which is derived from their formal models, has suffered in consequence.

The rabbit has been brought into the hat through the assumption of equalisation of profit. To begin with, it is taken as an axiom in the models of Emmanuel, Braun and Saigal that a single profit rate would rule in the two countries and that the capitalists of the periphery-countries would acquiesce in a levelling down of their own profit rates. But then the very same axiom is turned around at the end as a profound revelation, a rigorous theorem, that international trade with centre-countries would adversely affect the interests of the capitalists in periphery-countries; hence there is an antagonistic contradiction between the two groups of capitalists, one in the centre and the other in the periphery. This is plain circular reasoning.

Two Conditions

International trade among capitalist countries is today dominated by giant multi-national corporations which find enthusiastic collaborators in the capitalists of the periphery-countries. This arrangement is certainly not a zero-sum game among the capitalists of the centre and the periphery; both the capitalists are net beneficiaries in the exchange. Otherwise, the trade simply cannot continue on a voluntary basis. Trade among capitalist countries presupposes that the profit rate is enhanced in every country. Instead of generating contradiction among the capitalists, exchange between the countries effects a convergence of the economic interests among the capitalists of the world. That is to say, it is the first essential condition for international trade in a capitalist world that the surplus value appropriated by each participating capitalist must rise in the wake of such trade. It follows that the total

surplus value in the entire economic system has to go up as a result of international trade; otherwise, trade would stop. This may involve an intensification of the degree of exploitation of workers.

Now, unequal exchange in Emmanuel's sense can arise in two ways. First, the monopolists in world trade can dictate a relatively low price for their imports. Secondly, the international monetary system can also be made to work for the same purpose in a more subtle way. The unit of accounting can be such that in one country the total price of its commodities exceeds the total value, whereas the reverse happens in the other country. As we know, the divergence between total price and total value occurs if the organic composition of capital related to the commodity, which is used as the *numeraire*, does not tally with that of the economy as a whole. Total price falls short of the total value in case the organic composition of capital in the numeraire commodity is higher than what obtains in the over-all economy. By the same token, total price would be in excess of the total value, in the opposite situation with regard to the organic composition of capital⁷.

Dollar, pound sterling, franc, yen: these currencies are in effect the unit of account and medium of exchange in international transactions. These currencies as a group essentially reflects a certain basket of commodities produced in those countries where the organic composition of capital is relatively high. When the values of other commodities which are produced in periphery-countries with a lower organic composition of capital are transformed into prices in terms of this particular basket of commodities, their total price necessarily falls below the total value. On the other hand, the total price of the commodities of centre-countries turns out to be in excess of their total value. A transaction in these prices is evidently an unequal exchange.

Taking advantage of wage differentials, the pattern of international specialisation under capitalist conditions favours the growth of industries with high organic composition of capital in the centre countries and those with low organic composition of capital, in

the periphery-countries. This in turn further accentuates the degree of unequal exchange.

At any rate, one thing is clear: unequal exchange as such does not pit the capitalists of the centre and the periphery, one against the other. Their individual interests are fully subserved since profit rate improves all along the line as trade takes place. The bourgeoisie of the periphery-countries are allies and willing collaborators of the bourgeoisie of the centre-countries, particularly so far as trade is concerned.

It is the working class and the people at large in the periphery-countries who are the inevitable sufferer under unequal exchange. The contradiction that emerges here is between them on the one hand and the bourgeoisie of their own country and also of the centre-country on the other. As for the stand of the proletariat of the centre-country in this momentous confrontation it is difficult to generalise a priori; the nature of the concrete situation would determine their stance.

NOTES

1. A. Emmanuel, *Unequal Exchange: A Study of the Imperialism of Trade*, 1972.
2. P. Sweezy, *The Theory of Capitalist Development*, 1942, pp. 62-3.
3. A. Braun, "Unequal Exchange (mimeo)", August 1972. In his note "A Propos de L'Accumulation", Samir Amin uses the expanded reproduction schema of Marx and then combines it with Sraffa's theory of price formation; this note is not yet available to me. Amin in his book, *Accumulation*

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on a World Scale, seems to share the views of Emmanuel in this respect.

4. P. Sraffa, **Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities**, 1960.
5. J. C. Saigal, "On the Theory of Unequal Exchange" (mimeo), June 1973.
6. It should be recognised that Emmanuel proves the possibility of unequal exchange even when profit rates are different in two countries within a certain range; see Emmanuel, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-80. But his main thesis is drawn on the proposition that the capitalists in the periphery-countries suffer a shrinkage in profit rate in the wake of international trade.
7. Suppose gold is the unit of account. "If in gold industry a relatively high organic composition of capital obtains, the price of gold will be greater than its value. . . . If all other commodities are expressed in terms of gold, their total price must be less than their value. . . . Put still otherwise, if the organic composition of capital is relatively high in the gold industry, the transformation from value to price will raise the purchasing power of gold". Sweezy, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-2.

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A Drama of Terror

BY A DRAMA CRITIC

UTPAL Dutta's **Dushswapner Nagari** took Calcutta by storm and became the raging gambit in social upmanship. The CPAT's latest play **Naramedh** staged at the Academy on April 16 and directed by Asit Bose may not cause a storm but it will be remembered as a very clear statement, a scathing indictment of the semi-fascist terror that stalks the land and an honest picture of the State of West Bengal today. The play mirrored the undercurrents of fear and insecurity that permeate the daily lives of millions of people in West Bengal thanks to the sort of violence that is being assiduously perpetrated on large sections of our people by groups of mindless, ruthless, moronic young men mouthing Congress slogans and acting as the second arm of the police and often becoming in the process a law unto themselves.

A foreigner in search of an authentic Vishnu Murti arrives in India only to be fobbed off by a gang of ruffians with a shrunken skull belonging to one Sri B. R. Purokayastha who died in a very unusual way. The skull of this unknown Indian triggers off the play and we are face to face with all the lurid colours of the agony of West Bengal. A sleepy police station receives an urgent message from headquarters that a charge for embezzling Rs. 4 lakhs has been made against a Minister of the West Bengal Cabinet by a certain B. R. Purokayastha of Balirghat to the special commission set up to probe charges of fraud and pecuniary embezzlement against various Ministers. As this was a very serious affair, the police officers were now instructed to locate this man who had the temerity to impugn a Minister and force him to withdraw the charge. The police work themselves into a fury and in a wide sweeping movement begin to harass all the likely B. R. Purokayasthas of a particular locality. There soon develops a direct confrontation between the innocent, law-abiding, gentle citizens and a police force,

basically incompetent, sluggish and clueless but now roused to a pitch of frenzy and actuated by revengeful motives. We are then treated to a scene which grimly depicts the sort of persecution the people have to face at the hands of the lumpen aided and abetted by the police authorities. In the end the battered citizens answering to the name of Purokayastha are compelled to flee for their lives to an animal-infested jungle where few survive.

This is not the way that the people are going to be made to surrender to the forces of evil; history is replete with instances of how people can and do revolt against blatant injustice and overthrow the system that thrives on such injustice. The last song before the curtain falls expresses this note of dissent and ultimate hope.

Asit Bose used the technique of introducing mood music and silent movies in the background to lend colour and substance to the point he was trying to make in the play. On the whole the general standard of the performance was consistently high. The spirited young man who was roughed up by the Naba Ketan Sangha desperadoes showed poise and promise while the middle-aged lady whose son had been spirited away by the police gave an excellent rendering of the lacerated feelings of a mother pining for her lost son. Asit Bose as the freedom fighter teetering on the brink of disillusion and disgusted with the cant, hypocrisy and brutality of the Congress Government looked too robust for a man with a permanent asthmatic wheeze but the emotions he roused were genuine and nostalgic. The police officers were infinitely amusing in different trying situations. In the end they give in abjectly to the mastans and let them do the talking and the savaging. This is a unique feature of life in West Bengal today, boldly handled and imaginatively presented by the director. The 'mastans' were unashamedly true to type.

The music could, perhaps, have been a little more subdued while some of the film shots were screened too fast for them to register. The sequence showing the violence perpetrated on the out-

spoken young student was uniquely expressed in expressionistic ballet form. After all, mime gestures do have a greater emotional force than a mere barrage of words. Where Dushswapner's stage overflowed with stage accessories and flamboyant posters, Asit Bose restricted his décor to the bare minimum with some telegraph poles and a high voltage danger sign lending the play the appropriate starkness. This danger sign indicated that the gathering storm would soon rise from its unplumbed depths and sweep across the country. The change of scene from the police station to the doctor's clinic was simply denoted by a change of placard. In conclusion it would be fair to state that this was a hard-hitting and compact play and its power stemmed from its authenticity and the director's passion for confronting the truth head-on. There is no attempt to speak in Messianic tones. It is a slice of real life—poisoned at the source and turbulent, uncertain and tragic.

Brecht in Bhopal

N. K. SINGH

THE Brechtian concept of total theatre has opened new avenues of production, treatment and acting. Brecht does not talk of dogmatic theories but of 'attitude' in theatre, which is basically a means of communication for him. Communication of attitudes entails improvised freedom. In the process his plays bring about a fusion of various audio-visual media, thus presenting a richer concept of form and experience.

The total theatre draws its basic strength from the exploitation of the striking vitality and boldness of folk traditions.

As this coupled with the sense of social commitment helps to evolve what can be called the people's theatre.

Ajab Nyaya Vartoolacha, the Marathi adaptation of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (presented by Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh, of Bombay, at the 1975 National Theatre Festival at Bhopal) is an admirable exercise in verisimili-

tude. Fidelity to the original is not always a praiseworthy virtue in dramatic adaptations, but Fritz Bennewitz and Vijya Mehta, the directors of the play, have succeeded in working out a *via media*, so that the blend between liberties taken at the margin and overall allegiance to the core of the original suggest a near-perfect alchemy.

C. T. Khanolkar's adaptation carries the spirit, the right meaning and the stress of the original. The changes in imagery and situations have been made retaining appropriate implications. The various folk forms incorporated in the play do not disturb its intrinsic harmony.

The biggest merit of the play is that despite an obvious reference to the class struggle and open attack on the state power the propaganda does not become crude anywhere. In its totality the play is an excellent piece of art.

The production is superb: the outcome of an excellent teamwork. As for the artificial aids, lighting, costume etc., they are fine. But where is the need for them in the Brechtian theatre? After all his greatest success lies in dispensing with artificial aids.

Suicide Squad

Subtle McCarthyism, this is how the political philosophy of the Malayalam drama *Chaverppada* (presented by Agragamy Theatres, Trichur) can be summed up. *Chaverppada* means suicide squad. To revolt against the established order is to commit suicide, this is the blatant message of the drama, concealed in the garb of philosophical sermons.

The playwright/director Azeez says that the basic human emotions and attitudes remain the same though the time may change, i.e. the objective has no influence on subjective conditions.

To illustrate his point, the playwright selects two sets of people who lived in two separate epochs in the history of Kerala. One is *Chaverppada*, the suicide squad, who fought and died for the king—a legend from the history of Kerala. Another is the Naxalites, "who for a new ideology of their own fought a losing battle". The playwright concludes that both were destined for self-sacrifice and martyrdom

and it was a "losing battle" for both the groups.

The production is poor. There are some good pieces of background music (on tape) but at places they fail to keep in tune with the spirit of the theme. The use of Western music for the ancient Indian environment fails to click. Lighting, stage, all are poor.

The play failed to click primarily because the director overdid it in his zeal to create a "new style and syntax and by trying to blend the elements of Greek tragedy, Sanskrit drama and the Brechtian theatre.

Six Characters

A well-known critic had once written that transplantation, whether of high-yielding variety of seeds or of plays from abroad, is a difficult art. Nandikar of Calcutta has revelled in this particular challenge ever since the group was formed. At Bhopal, the troupe presented *Natyakarer Sandhane Chati Charitra*, the Bengali adaptation of Pirandello's *Six Characters In Search of An Author*.

As the professional troupe tries to reenact the 'scenes' they fail. How can it be otherwise when the scene is but an illusion to them? The acting that they indulge in, sometimes abounds in theatrical tones and exaggerated postures. The director tries to make a romantic situation out of the tragic encounter between the father and the step-daughter in the brothel, which he finds at the same time 'obscene'. The entire troupe cannot but view the plot without an eye on professional detachment. For instance, at a most tragic moment the director says, "beautiful".

The production, however, was superb. Director Ajitesh Bandhopadhyaya could have done even better without creating the artificial stage. The plain stage, as it was in the first act, was good enough. There was also need for a little editing. There was no need to enact the tableau in the end.

It was but natural for the entire cast to be at ease after 300 performances. Keya Chakrabarty leaves an everlasting impression in the role of the step-daughter. Ajitesh in the role of

the father presents a beautiful study in under-playing.

Saari Rat

Saari Raat (Hindi) by Badal Sircar, presented by Anamika, Calcutta, did not succeed in involving the audience in the personal plot. But the brilliant direction (Shivkumar Jhunjhunwala) and production helped to save the drama from turning into a mediocre one. Aditya Vikram was splendid. Yama Agarwal looked very natural in the first act but with the mist of surrealism developing in the play she gradually loses that natural charm.

Mera Akash

Mera Akash is the Hindi version of the widely-acclaimed Marathi mono-play, **Dhar Hindate Askashi**.

Since the original Marathi script is rather commonplace, the noted Hindi satirist, Sharad Joshi, who translated the p.v., has done well to focus on Mrs Suman Dharmadhikari's interpretation. It seems, however, that Mrs Dharmadhikari, that veteran of the Marathi stage, has not been able to fully grasp the Hindi version. The reason is perhaps psychological. Over 100 performances of this play have been held in Marathi. There is an obvious dominating influence of the Marathi performances on the Hindi version which is reflected in the Marathi phrases and terms that creep in inadvertently between the dialogues. Mrs Dharmadhikari's pronunciation is also not flawless. This is her first appearance on the Hindi stage. She will have to go a long way before she can adopt the correct Hindi style. She, however, makes no excuse on this account and says, "the play after all depicts a Marathi character".

The play deals with the pathos of a 'working wife'—as something different from 'working women'. She sacrifices herself for the family but in the end finds herself deserted and heartbroken. She is left all alone in the wide world.

It needed a veteran like Suman Dharmadhikari to convey the message of this 150-minute-long drama. Her delineation of 25 different characters in the play is subtle. The range of voice, emotion and expression dis-

played by her leaves an ever-lasting impression. She enchants the audience throughout the play—despite the language difficulty—primarily because she does not depend upon the dialogues but on expression. Some mimes are remarkably beautiful.

Letters

"Non-Aligned India"

In your editorial comment, "Rupee and Rouble" (29-3-75), you have spoken of "Nehru's non-aligned India". This must have surprised many a reader of *Frontier*. Almost right from its independent beginning, India has been a mendicant country, increasingly dependent on U.S.-controlled foreign aid. Who else was the author of such a sterile and subservient role, under the camouflage of "non-alignment", if not Nehru? Maybe he was clever and subtle enough to extract more and more of this aid from various capitalist countries through manipulations. But can that be considered much of an achievement? Moreover, who benefited from this mendicancy, the enormous dimensions of unprincipled foreign aid pouring into government coffers? Certainly not the masses of India. It was always the small coterie of the upper crust of our society which benefited and fattened itself on this so-called aid. Where is "non-alignment" in this ghastly business? Can anyone become "non-aligned" merely by continuously and ceaselessly harping on it?

Moreover, we must be great fools to think that imperialists of one variety or the other (dollar or rouble) extend aid just for the heck of it. If they do that, they will cease to be imperialists. They not only expect their clients to become their political camp-followers but they also want to bleed the recipient countries white by spreading their tentacles far and wide in their economic life, besides vulgarising their socio-cultural life-patterns. (The only exception in this respect has been China—a Third World country). The imperialists bribe the ruling classes through "aid", which in any case goes to governments, the handmaids of the

ruling vested interests; the unsuspecting masses have to pay for the so-called aid—which never reaches anyway—through the nose.

There can never be genuine "non-alignment" for any country if it does not strictly adhere to the basic principle of self-reliance. There never was any such thing as "Nehru's non-aligned India". If anything, it has been a case of double-alignment, pure and simple. In Nehru's time India was mortgaged to the one super power and in Indira's daughter's time, as lamented by you, it is mortgaged to the other super power. "Non-aligned India" has always been a big myth.

Ramadhani
New Delhi

Civil Rights

There exists considerable concern for democratic rights among intellectuals and professionals of various fields in the country. We have constituted a committee to canalise this concern and undertake meaningful programmes for restoration of democratic rights and release of political prisoners being held in West Bengal, Andhra, Kerala and other places. The Committee undertook a signature campaign as its first activity in Ahmedabad and Surat, in Gujarat. The volunteers moved through various institutions, informing, explaining, discussing and in the process, educating others and themselves about the violation of democratic and human rights, continued detention of over 30,000 political prisoners, many without trial under inhuman jail conditions and torture. We learned first-hand the information gap that exists among the people about threats to democratic rights and the condition of political prisoners. We have tried to fill this gap as much as possible in the short span of time by making available the Amnesty International Report and other material published in Indian newspapers from time to time.

Most of the major institutions in Ahmedabad and Surat have been covered, yielding over 600 signatures from professors, students, lawyers, doctors, researchers and trade unionists. On

port is modest compared to the need
ists. But it was meaningful as
ed us know the kind of educa-
at will be necessary to streng-
the democratic consciousness of
ople here. We are, of course,
to find such a wide support and
atinue our effort.

The Committee will identify the vic-
ms those who are in jail for years
n a trary or so charges and unable
ceive legal help for lack of money.
It will raise funds and arrange all pos-
ible legal aid so that they can be
eed.

The Committee solicits information
bout cases where government is cur-
ing democratic rights and victimi-
sment. Details of victims can
sent to the Committee. We also
solicit citizens to contribute profession-
nancial and such other help as
ey may be able to offer.

G. Patel,

Committee for Protection of
Democratic Rights and
Release of Political Prisoners.
3, Sadhana Colony,
AHMEDABAD-14

Hyderabad Committee

the crisis in all spheres of our
nal and social life deepens, the
ment is unleashing repression on
ho are attempting to combat
ation and come out of it. In
these facts people from different
life, peasants, agricultural la-
factory workers, middle-class
o, teachers, lecturers, advo-
journalists and students from all
State met on April 5 and 6,
the modes of repression and
Organisation for the Pro-
Democratic Rights at the
his level. A state convention will be
rt sd on May 31 and June 1.

C. Venkatakrishna

Convenor, Ad-hoc Committee,
Hyderabad

Culture and Police

Recent Andhra Pradesh Govern-
ts. is no moral stand to hold a

World Telugu Conference after killing
so many revolutionaries. Through this
fanfare and sheer exhibitionism, the
Congress rulers worship the decadent
past of Telugu culture and literature,
without caring for the economic base
of the common man.

On the occasion of this conference
some of our comrade writers chose to
express their disapproval through pro-
test, march and pamphlet's under the
leadership of Mahakavi Sri Sri True
to their exploiting nature the rulers
imprison the fighting present in order
to honour the past.

We strongly condemn the arrest of
Mahakavi Sri Sri, Cheraband Raju, M.
T. Khan, Nagnamuni, Kashipathy, Ran-
ganatham, Tej Rajender Singh, Madav
Rao, Prabhanjan, Mrs Vijaya Ranga-
nadhram (editor *Pilupu*), Aruna, Jalaja,
Rajyalaxmi, and demand their imme-
diate release.

Jwalamukhi
Nikhileswar
Hyderabad

Mixing

It is certainly in tune with revolu-
tionary principles that the communists
should form alliances with other petty-
bourgeois parties whenever they rise in
revolt against the ruling classes and
should strain to keep the movement in
the right direction so that it gradually
acquires a revolutionary character in
course of time. But the CPI(M) is
keen on coalescing with men, whom they
once described as people's enemies, only
for election purposes; for instance,
a report in *Deshhitoishi* on May 19,
1967 published in the name of Mr A.
K. Gopalan and Mr Basavapunniah said
that J.P. was a pedlar of a national
government, selling the idea of military
dictatorship as an alternative to it.
At that time J. P. Narayan was in fa-
vour of a coalition government at the
Centre and urged all other parties to
put their ideologies in cold storage in
the interest of the so-called coalition.

J. P. is still the same. It is the CP
(M) which has exposed itself.

P. N. Dhar
Calcutta

Appeal

As many as 34 countries have dis-
pensed with the death sentence in ac-
cordance with the resolution passed
by UN. But in spite of appeals from
all walks of life to commute the death
sentence on the two Naxalite prisoners,
Comrades Kistagowd and Bhoomaiah of
Andhra Pradesh, the Government of
India is keeping silent.

Recently in Kerala three Naxalites,
Comrades, Viswaroopan, Gopinath Ku-
rukhal and Bhaskar Kurup, were senten-
ced to death.

We request the intellectuals and the
public to press the Government to com-
mute the five death sentences and to
do away with the death sentence.

A. P. Revolutionary
Writers' Association
(District Unit), Anapur

Search and Stop

On the instructions of the Second
Additional Sessions Court, Visakhapat-
nam, which is sitting on the Parvati-
puram Naxalite Conspiracy Case,
the police stopped all the accused on
bail and the visitors from entering the
court compound at the outer gate itself
on April 1. Mr T. Nagi Reddy, presi-
dent, Parvatipuram Conspiracy Case
Defence Aid Committee, and Mr D.
Krishnamurthy, Secretary of the com-
mittee, were among those obstructed
from entering the court. The
police said that they would
be allowed to enter the court
compound only after they had been
searched, to which the above protested
and came back from the court
without interviewing Kanu Sanyal,
Souren Bose, Chowdary Tejeswara Rao
and others and without watching the
court proceedings.

We protest against this search order.
We demand immediate withdrawal of
this procedure which is humiliating to
any self-respecting citizen. It is our
opinion that even the formal indepen-
dence of the judiciary is at stake.

T. Nagi Reddy
Andhra Pradesh

Regd. WB/CC-90

Frontier

May 3, 19

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers of India under R.N.16516/68

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