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MASTER PLAN FOR U.P.

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It is not difficult to make out that the Prime Minister's sudden move to activate the National Integration Council to ensure a fair deal to the Muslims and the Harijans and her efforts to win the support and cooperation of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah and Mr K. Kamaraj are of a piece. Conscious of the steadily diminishing popularity of her party, she is trying to mend Congress fences before she faces next year's mini-general elections on the basis of her success in eradicating poverty. In another six months, Assembly elections are scheduled to be held in the four States of Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Nagaland, and Manipur. The Prime Minister has a special interest in the election in Uttar Pradesh. It is her home State, and if the Congress fails to secure an absolute majority in this State it will be reckoned as a sure token of the decline of the ruling party and its leader. The Prime Minister has to ensure that Uttar Pradesh remains a Congress bastion; otherwise her stature in the party and the country will suffer.

To secure this end she has planned a many-pronged approach. The Harijans who, even after nearly three decades of independence, may be dispossessed of their life and property at the slightest whim of the so-called upper caste leaders of the rural society, are being promised freedom from persecution and fear. Apparently, the Prime Minister hopes that this old promise in old form will reassure the Harijans, however much their disenchantment with the Congress may be; they will vote for the Congress despite the fact that their tormentors are flourishing in the party. The "rapprochement" with Sheikh Abdullah is designed to win over Muslim votes. The talks with the Sheikh had been going on for a long time; in the mean time, Mrs Gandhi brought off a minor coup by installing a Muslim as chief minister of Bihar. The Muslim voters of Uttar Pradesh should not fail to be impressed by the fact that two of their neighbour States, Rajasthan and Bihar, have chief ministers belonging to their community. If they need greater proof of the secularism of the ruling party, Sheikh Abdullah's decision to place his services at the disposal of the Prime Minister will provide it. The bait to Mr Kamaraj is the Prime Minister's third prong. Though she claims that the Congress was split in 1969 on the basis of ideology, she does not think that her socialist faith will be compromised if along with Mr Kamaraj some

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Congress (O) leaders of Uttar Pradesh, including Mr C. B. Gupta, join her party. She wants to diminish the Congress (O) in Uttar Pradesh.

What will happen to other aspects of the Prime Minister's master plan for winning the elections in Uttar Pradesh is not known for certain yet. But Sheikh Abdullah himself has vouched for her success in winning him over. His readiness to help the Prime Minister in solving "national problems" should silence those who seek to justify his long and cruel detention on the allegation that he was a secessionist. The Sheikh has made it clear that his decision will not conflict with the fight for self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. He has not given up his basic stand; he has merely repeated what he said in the past over and over again. The stance which is now considered unexceptionable was valid ground for what must be the longest political incarceration in free India. Evidently, at that time it suited the Government to propitiate other gods. Political exigence has cleared Sheikh Abdullah. The Prime Minister needs him not only to win over the sulky Muslim voters of Uttar Pradesh but also to strengthen her case should there be an attempt in terms of the Simla agreement to settle the Kashmir issue through bilateral negotiations between India and Pakistan.

Tall Promises

Mr Siddhartha Ray declared that he had very good personal relationship with the West Bengal power men and he was sure they would not strike work. Three days after, the engineers gave a strike call. This is of course, a slightly better record than President Giri's, whose clarion call for a moratorium on strikes was followed almost immediately by the strike of U.P. power engineers.

But Mr Ray should consider it small comfort. His rendezvous at Yojana Bhavan, on which he had been building his romantic hopes and giving matching publicity, has turned out to be the biggest flop ever. That he was given the longest interview than any other Chief Minister or that he was commended as a hard task master by Mr D. P. Dhar should be no consolation because his Rs. 1,500-crore Plan has been slashed to Rs. 975 crores or even less if the CMDA and Hooghly money is included. His masterpiece, CADP (which he got authored by his able aide, Mr Pannalal Dasgupta, and others) has been treated as utterly bogus.

Mr Ray's promises of providing so many thousand jobs in so many days has already acquired the dimensions of a legend famous all over the country. Mr C. Subramaniam's latest letter to Mr Ray has added one more dimension to his capabilities. It seems that Mr Ray for unfathomable reasons could not start the cement factory, the nylon factory, the alloy steel factory, the motor tyre and tube factory and the scooter factory, for all of which letters of intent had been issued over a year back. And so the Rs. 100-crore investment possibilities never saw the light of day. With this background, Mr Ray has promised the people of the State a string of industries within the next few months. All these industries are outside the projects for which letters of intent had been issued and unused. For the sake of decency, let us not name them, but we can assure Mr Ray that he is creating a mighty problem for Mr Santigopal of the Bengali jatra. He has been playing with great aplomb the roles of Hitler, Ram Mohan, Napoleon, Subhas Bose, Othello, Lenin and Marx. Unless he opts for a female role and chooses to play Mrs Gandhi, it is highly likely he would like to play Mr Siddhartha Ray. But how would Mr Santigopal portray him: as a windbag?

More Powers ?

When Mr Shashi Bhusan, M.L.A. first issued his statement pleading for "limited dictatorship", so many people were inclined to dismiss it as an erratic gimmick of a headline-hunting politician. But with the publication of a long article on the subject by him in an English daily of Delhi, one wonders whether the plea is just the casual outburst of an irresponsible Congressman. Of course no one, not even Congressmen, would accuse Mr Shashi Bhusan of any high sense of responsibility. He is known to have a peculiar penchant for stunts. Even in this particular case, the fact that very few, if any, Congress leaders have disowned or even dissented from his thesis makes one suspicious that this is a command performance. Mrs Indira Gandhi, of course, said that as she understood it, dictatorship meant "No Press, no Parliament and no Opposition to raise its voice against the ruling party and went on to declare that "We do not want such an India."

But what is the India we have today? The Press is controlled by monopolists serving vested interests. All that the Government wants, under the name of diffusion of ownership etc. is to impose total Government control over the Press as on radio and television—so as to serve the exploiters better. The main justification advanced for "limited dictatorship" is that Mrs Gandhi needs more power to deal with hoarders, blackmarketeers and such other preyers of black money. The rationale is pious. Every power that Mrs Gandhi has asked for, has been given her by the people. Even the institutional checks and balances provided in the Constitution to act as constraints on the arbitrariness of the executive have been undergoing progressive attrition during the past few years. To that extent, Indian democracy has already been seriously enfeebled. Furthermore, she

more than a year and a half now, the country has been in a state of emergency which confers on Government almost unlimited powers. The Defence of India Rules, the Maintenance of Internal Security Act and such other emergency statutes are laws which in the hands of a Government honestly resolved to curb crimes against the country's polity or economy can be ruthlessly effective. Yet it is precisely during this period of emergency that the country has been dragged into the worst economic crisis since 1947. The problem, thus, is not of a lack of powers, but of a lack of will, or rather ability to exercise these powers. Mrs Gandhi's Government has badly handled the country's economy. Having run short of alibis and excuses, and panicky at the swelling tide of popular discontent, the ruling party now wants to make whatever of democracy is left a scapegoat for its failure. That the plea of inadequacy of powers is nonsense Mr Shashi Bhusan and his tribe know quite well.

In A Mess

The people who decide India's food policy seem to have a limitless capacity to bungle things. First, the decision to import foodgrains was delayed as long as possible. The crisis was underplayed and for quite some time the nation was told that there was nothing to worry about. But then the cat got out of the bag. Famine conditions appeared in many places, and traders taking advantage of the unprecedented bungling by the Government over the takeover of the wholesale wheat trade raised prices and restricted supplies. Imports became inevitable. But by that time food prices on the world market in a year of extensive drought had already started rising. The Government did the wrong thing at the wrong time. And even when there were clear indications that imports of at least 6 to 8 million tonnes would be needed to tide over the difficulties, New Delhi preferred

not to go straight to the point. In its wisdom, it decided to make the purchases in instalments, little realising that neither prices nor supplies would wait for it. This policy of half-measures has now come home to roost. The two million tonnes for which orders were initially placed and almost all of which has already reached the country has made little difference to the food situation. Import of another at least 4.5 million tonnes has become inevitable. In fact, if the Government has the means and the available supplies, it would be better to go for a little more for it is always safe to have a little margin in planning the food budget.

But unfortunately the Government has neither the means nor the supplies. The world market has greatly hardened within the course of the past few months. It has not only become a seller's market but almost all the exportable surplus has already been booked. Argentina, an important supplier, has been hit by drought. Canada and Australia, still perhaps left with some stocks, have shown little response to India's overtures to have special credit arrangements and have indicated their preference for straight across-the-board deals in hard currency. That leaves the United States. But here also it is reported that nearly 80 per cent of the supplies expected during the current year ending in June next has already been contracted for. With more countries coming with shopping bags—Japan and some South American countries are the latest to arrive—and increasing pressure from U.S. traders, notably bakers, for restriction on exports, prices on the American market have zoomed. That wonder-boy of the Food Ministry, A. P. Shinde, tried to shock the MPC sufficiently when he recently rattled off figures to show that American wheat would now cost \$40 more partly for price rise and partly for higher freight charges. But he owes an explanation for the mess his ministry has made of food import plans.

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Pakistan's Role In The New U.S. Strategy—II

EQBAL AHMAD

NEVERTHELESS, the Memos as well as subsequent decisions indicate a policy of maintaining American economic and political presence in India and Bangladesh. Thus there has been no actual or projected diminution of American economic aid to India, and the U.S. has become the largest aid giver to Bangladesh. In effect, India and Bangladesh offer the most clear cut example of peaceful co-existence, and of Russia's junior partnership in Pax Americana.

There were solid reasons for White House indifference to its liberal critics' warnings that the policy of 'tilting' toward Pakistan would lead to loss of India to Russian influence. And there were good grounds for welcoming an extension of Russia's role in the sub-continent. The risk of India turning into a Soviet client under the leadership of the Congress party is about as remote as Britain's entry into the Warsaw Pact under the prime ministership of Harold Wilson. An intelligent practitioner of realpolitik, Kissinger could not conceive of Mrs Gandhi basing her long term policies on temporary irritation. After all, India is one country to have clearly profited from its "neutrality". (Thanks mainly to its hostility toward China, and its place as the second most populous country in the world, it has been the object of courtship by both the U.S.S.R. and U.S.A. Both have invested billions in rubles and dollars to build its economy to match China's; since the Sino-Indian War both have contributed heavily to the modernization of its armed forces. It is difficult to imagine India cutting off a primary source of support just because American rhetoric caused it some inconvenience or anger. Dr Kissinger put the point rather succinctly when referring to the Indian Prime Minister he told the W.S.A.G. meeting that

"The lady is cold-blooded and tough and will not turn into a Soviet satellite merely because of pique." (New York Times, January 15, 1972. Text of Memo of December 8).

India is also one of the rare countries which could be presumed 'safe' under Russian influence, even if the latter were to extend beyond tolerable limits. For in India the U.S.S.R. must continue to favour the status quo under the anti-Chinese Indian National Congress over an assumption of power by the Communists who, despite the many rifts among them, constitute the only viable opposition movement in the country. For if the Communists were to come to power they would most likely be neutral in the Sino-Soviet dispute, i.e., if the pro-Chinese factions do not dominate the government. Hence India will be 'safe for democracy' even or especially under Soviet tutelage. Much the same can be said about Bangladesh. The pro-Western Awami League leaders are assured of continued Soviet support and protection for the simple reason that the only alternative to them are the Communists and leftists who are unlikely to join the Russian crusade against China. The facts that the Indian government coupled its intervention in East Bengal with massive repression of the left in the Indian half of Bengal, and that subsequently both Mrs Gandhi and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman have continued their assault on the left without even mild disapproval from the U.S.S.R. only confirms this expectation.

More importantly, the extension of Soviet role—and this has been noticeable especially in the field of armaments—in India and Bangladesh helps promote the single most important objective of recent American policy, viz: the stimulation of Sino-Soviet confrontation, and the military encirclement of China by

U.S.S.R. Since the U.S. is less interested in multiplying its own encirclement of China, Bangladesh and Eastern India have practically no strategic value for it. On the other hand expanding Soviet presence on their South-Western flank can be perceived only as an ominous development by the Chinese.

The White House attitude of equanimity toward the potential expansion of Soviet role did not extend to West Pakistan. Maintaining its 'integrity' not Pakistan's, were important to the U.S. The White House risked considerable public criticism to create the illusion of support for and solidarity with the West Pakistani dominated central government. And as the war with India entered its last phase the U.S. became genuinely concerned over the possibility that India might follow up its victory in East Pakistan by pushing toward the West. The Anderson papers indicate the concern in all the WSAG meetings.

However, it was not until December 6 that the White House began considering ways to prevent India "dismembering" Pakistan. By that day the Pakistani defence in the East had crumbled, and America's fall had in fact been dismembered. At this meeting, the C.I.A. director Richard Helms "stated that for practical purposes it (East Pakistan) is now an independent state recognized by India." Ambassador Johnson suggested that the "Pak armed forces now in E. Pakistan could be held hostage." His opinion was reinforced by General Westmoreland who noted that "there was no means of evacuating West Pak forces from the East wing..." Whereupon leaving some 90,000 beleaguered soldiers of an allied nation in the lurch, Dr Kissinger stated that the next stage of play will involve determining our attitude towards the state of Bangla-

desh."

According to the *Memo* the meeting of December 6 "was devoted to the massive problems facing Bangladesh as a nation" with Dr Kissinger indicating that "the problem should be studied now." However, the "subject of possible military aid to Pakistan is also to be examined but on a very close hold basis. The matter of Indian redeployment from East to West was considered, as was the legality of the current 'sea blockade' by India." The "close hold basis" meant simply that Pakistan would get military aid only if India seemed determined to overrun its Western provinces. "The President," indicated Kissinger, "is not inclined to let the Paks be defeated." [sic] And Mr Sisco [State Department] "stated that from a political point of view our efforts would have to be directed at keeping the Indians from 'extinguishing' West Pakistan." A decision was made to look into the possibility of supplying arms to Pakistan quietly—through Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

Threat to West

Augmented concern with the security of the Western wing of Pakistan dominated the meeting of December 8. The war had stiffened on the Western front. C.I.A. Director Helms reported that Mrs Gandhi had indicated that before heeding a U.N. call she intends to straighten out the Southern border of Azad Kashmir. It is reported that... Mrs Gandhi attempts to eliminate Pakistan's armour and air force capabilities. Kissinger was alarmed and obviously agitated: "Dr Kissinger suggested that the key issue if the Indians turn on West Pakistan is Azad Kashmir.

... The elimination of the Pak armoured and air forces would make the Paks defenceless. It would turn West Pakistan into a client state. The possibility elicits a number of questions. Can we allow a U.S. ally to go down completely [sic] while we participate in a blockade? Can we allow the Indians to scare us off, believing that if U.S. supplies are

needed that they will not be provided?" On that day, for the first time Kissinger expressed doubt over the U.S. ban on sales of arms to Pakistan: "Dr Kissinger suggested that perhaps we never really analyzed what the real danger was when we were turning off the arms to Pakistan." (Text of Memo on Indian-Pakistan War. *New York Times*, January 15, 1972).

It is doubtful whether India actually intended or had the capacity to "extinguish" West Pakistan. But it is clear that Nixon and Kissinger feared that India was getting carried away by the momentum of its victory and was not heeding earlier White House warnings to keep off the one half of Pakistan the U.S. wished to protect. In an interview in *Time Magazine* Nixon too claimed that the American intelligence community had reason to believe that there were forces in India pushing for total victory. Once this perception took hold, the White House made the minimal moves needed to prevent escalation of fighting on the Western front: King Hussein of Jordan was kept in a "holding pattern" as a conduit of arms to Pakistan. India received warnings against pushing on to West Pakistan. Enterprise, the nuclear warship, showed flag in the Bay of Bengal. President Nixon intervened with the Kremlin and induced Deputy Foreign Minister Vasily V. Kuznetsov to journey to New Delhi with warnings favouring Indian acceptance of cease fire. This was obtained on December 16 following the fall of Dacca and surrender of 90,000 Pakistani soldiers. The next day, Z. A. Bhutto, President-designate of Pakistan and an erstwhile "Yankee baiter" faced T.V. cameras outside the Western White House; his right hand raised, fingers crossed, he said that Pakistan was "beholden" to America for its friendship and support.

The importance of West Pakistan to the U.S. derives, of course, from its strategic value as a state bounded by India, Iran, Afghanistan, China,

and U.S.S.R. But even more important to the American interest is its commanding location at the Indian Ocean's opening into the Persian Gulf—the source of 60% of the world's oil reserves. The policy of maintaining an all American foothold in West Pakistan while creating a U.S.-Soviet condominium in the rest of the sub-continent appears to be related to the Kissinger-Nixon strategy of creating a new and dependable pro-Western constellation of power in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean regions—an informal yet cohesive military network which would supercede the role, in that region, previously assigned to NATO, and to the ill-fated Baghdad Pact, Spain and Portugal at one end, with Turkey, Greece and Israel in the heartland. Iran and Pakistan are willed to constitute the eastern primates of Pax Americana. We are witnessing the development of the Mediterranean version of Nixon's "Southern Strategy."

The outlines of Nixon's design emerged during his Mediterranean tour in the fall of 1970, and were also discernible in the seemingly contradictory developments associated with the cease-fire along the Israeli-Egyptian front. In reports written at the time, I had pointed out that the Roger's Plan, which in fact was drafted by Kissinger's staff in the White House, not by Rogers' men in the State Department, was promoted to obtain some tactical gains rather than to achieve a Middle East settlement based on the U.N. Security Council Resolution of November 22, 1967. It is now a fact that the cease-fire brought about by the now abandoned Rogers' Plan accomplished the tactical objectives of (a) defusing the Arab-Israeli conflict and freezing the situation to Israel's advantage; (b) reducing the risks of U.S.-U.S.S.R. confrontation; (c) slowing down the influx of Soviet arms into Egypt and growing influence in the Middle East at a time when the Egyptian deployment of defensive SAM missiles and the arrival of Sovietflown Migs

in the area were regarded as disturbing developments in Washington; (d) further dividing the Arabs, and isolating the Palestinian resistance who then became a relatively easy target of King Hussein.

Visit To 6th Fleet

Nixon's 1970 visit to the Sixth Fleet, his first trip abroad as President, under-scored the importance his government attached to the region. The visit to the Fleet was expected to be an exercise in gunboat diplomacy, but the manner in which he conducted it surprised many observers. He skipped France altogether. The stopover in Italy was a formality, as was the return through London. Nixon set the tone of this tour with the declaration in Rome that "one of the primary indispensable principles of American policy is to maintain the necessary strength in the Mediterranean". (*New York Times*, September 28, 1970). In the Vatican, a malleable Pope had his "spiritual power" contrasted with the reminder that the "President of the strongest nation in the world" had come to visit "the mightiest military force which exists in the world on any ocean".

The scene then shifted to the aircraft carrier *Saratoga* which had been poised in a well coordinated plan with Israel, American officials later confirmed, for intervention in Jordan in case Syria entered the battle or the Palestinian resistance made unexpected gains in the battle against Hussein; to Yugoslavia, Spain, and Greece. Display of strength, sabre-rattling, flag-showing are important ingredients in Kissinger's concept of imperial diplomacy; and they are congenial to Nixon's temperament. He was resentful of Abdel Nasser for dying at an inconvenient time, for it led to the cancellation of the Fleet's elaborate display of fire power. Max Frankel of the *New York Times*, on board with Nixon, reported him wondering "How would the Russians or the Israelis regard a president who could be driven off his course by the Egyptian leader, even in death". He was

worried too that Tito might cancel his invitation. But the surviving grandee of the neutralist bloc passed by the funeral of his avowed friend to wine and dine Nixon during the week when Arab people buried Abdel Nasser and under intensified attack 10,000 tons of U.S. bombs fell on Vietnam. That week Nixon learned an important fact about 'socialist realism' which would later help in dealings with China and U.S.S.R.

Armaments supplies to Greece had been resumed two weeks earlier despite protests from influential European and American groups. A Presidential visit to Greece, however, was deemed inopportune at the time. Hence while Nixon visited Franco, Defense Secretary Laird was in Athens giving what he described as "high priority" to the modernization of Greek forces. (*New York Times*, October 5, 1970). The "modernization" of the junta has since continued on a bilateral basis as well as under the cover of NATO. The enlargement of U.S. armaments aid to Greece and expansion of U.S. naval activities in Greek ports are now well known facts. Similar developments obtain in the case of Turkey, and Iran; Spain and Portugal.

Chief Constable

If these states are being readied to act as sentinels, Israel appears to have been allotted the role of chief constable. It fits all the specifications of an ideal surrogate. Its military performance in 1967 has been a matter of unabashed envy to the Vietnam frustrated Chief of General Staff. Its Air Force is regarded as an effective deterrent against Syrian or Iraqi attacks on friends and allies in the oil rich kingdoms. Between France and India it is the only power to enjoy the nuclear option. Its technological sophistication reassures U.S. officials who have deep faith in the decisive power of machines. Above all, the economic and military dependence on the U.S. is viewed as being permanent; hence its stability as an ally is presumed. The

image is of Sparta in service of Rome. An irresistible opportunity. As a result, since September 1970 the Congress has given the White House what the *Times* has described as "the most open-ended arms buying programme in the world." (*New York Times*, September 29, 1970). And the Honourable John McCormack, the Speaker of the House said with an injured note of surprise: "I have never seen in my 40 years as a member of this body [Congress] language of this kind used in an Authorization or in an appropriation bill." Consequently Israel armed with the most advanced offensive weapons in the conventional arsenal of the U.S. has become the great power of the Middle East. No other country in the world ever enjoyed so complete a commitment from the U.S. And no other state in history achieved status as a great regional power almost entirely on the basis of foreign support. It is only in this context that one can explain active Israeli campaigning of the rejection of Nixon, the Zionist lobby's rejection of McGovern, and Nixon's statement that there can be no viable security for Israel without U.S. military aid to Greece.

A country like Pakistan cannot expect so exalted a place. Its role is to remain inhospitable to the Soviet Union, particularly to its navy. While expansion of some U.S. naval facilities there could be of value, hence preparations are under way for the development of port facilities in Pasni and Gawadar along the Mekran Coast overlooking the Persian Gulf. As a Muslim state which is neither Persian nor Arab, Pakistan is also ideally situated to help and administer the disputed oil Sheikdoms of the Gulf. Hence with American blessings and British help it has established military and policy advisory missions in Muscat, Oman, Abu Dhabi, and Kuwait.

The assumptions which define the U.S. strategy in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean region need be briefly capitulated. First, a basic

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... of the Nixon-Kissinger diplomacy is a certain suspicion of U.S.S.R. as a rival and potential challenge of the paramouncy of the U.S. International instability is viewed as potentially disadvantageous to America. Hence U.S. policy toward U.S.S.R. combines elements of containment and confrontation in some regions, of cooptation and selective towards in others.

In the Mediterranean, Red Sea, and Persian Gulf regions, it perceives its hegemony threatened by Soviet "intrusion". Officials in the Nixon government believe that following the Johnson-Kosygin meeting in Glassboro, the U.S. miscalculated the extent of Soviet ambition and its capability for penetration in the Middle East. As a result, they remained sanguine over growing Soviet influence in the area. Example was cited of Soviet military missions in U.A.R.

Lacking sizable aircraft-carriers necessary for air-combat and deep inland penetration, the Russian navy was considered incapable of posing a challenge to the Sixth Fleet. American officials had felt sure that in an effort to overcome this disadvantage, the U.S.S.R. shall not introduce Soviet personnel in the Middle East, as it had not done so in North Vietnam. The news that Soviet pilots might be manning the advanced MIG's in U.A.R. destroyed both assumptions and aroused American concern to the extent that the normally cool Dr. Kissinger spoke of forcibly ejecting U.S.S.R. from Egypt.

Second, the region in question is strategically and economically too critical to allow for a policy of "co-existence" such as the one obtaining in S. Asia. The projected future shortage of gas and oil supplies makes Middle Eastern oil not only a major source of profit but the most strategic resources of modern times. For the West to control this resource is not only an economic but a military necessity.

Third, the fear that American power is slipping from both Western Europe and the Mediterranean re-

gion is enhanced by the belief that France (for reason of "Gaullist chauvinism") and Italy (because of "instability and leftward swing") have become unreliable allies. In Great Britain, Washington retains a lingering hope and trust. But given its economic problems, and the isolationist mood of its people, the United Kingdom is expected to continue to "abdicate its responsibilities" as a world power. As a result, officials envisage a gradual elimination of NATO activities in the Mediterranean, and wish to replace it with a new alliance of states more or less dependent on U.S. economic and military power.

Mercenaries

Fourth, given the economic and social pressures at home, the U.S. government foresees the impossibility of committing more military personnel abroad. In order to avoid serious opposition to an aggressive foreign policy, to reduce operational costs of deploying large numbers of American soldiers and to prevent the resurgence of "neo-isolationist sentiments" in America, the government is seeking to minimize direct involvement of American "boys" abroad by making maximum use not only of technology, but also of mercenaries and surrogates. Thus, the Mediterranean is witnessing not only the emergence of a "Southern Strategy", the application of "Nixon Doctrine" to the Mediterranean, but also a special brand of "Vietnamization".

Fifth, it appears clear that U.S. policy under Nixon prefers the creation of regional constellations of pro-Western allies based on bilateral ties with the U.S. rather than on formal collective security pacts favoured under Truman and Eisenhower. This trend is based on Kissinger's correct assessment of the disadvantages which accrue to the leading member of formal collective security arrangements. A set of allies each tied by separate bilateral agreements to the paramount power gives the latter manoeuvrability and control unobtainable in collective arrangements. It is a tribute to the flexi-

bility of this arrangement that countries such as Muslim Pakistan, Arab Jordan, fascist Greece, militarist Turkey can all fit in the same alliance without causing any embarrassment to themselves, each other, or the paramount power.

Lastly, it is noteworthy that, with the exception of Israel and Pakistan, all the primary agents in this configuration of power are fascist or proto-fascist governments. Close analysis of recent U.S. role in the making and survival of regimes in Greece and Turkey indicates a conscious preference in Washington for what may be described as "developmental fascism". This preference is pragmatic and stems from the quest of stability. Alliance with the U.S. is unlikely to be a popular posture in any country of the region except Israel (whose population apparently believes such a relationship to be basic to their security). Hence no democratic government can sustain it for too long. Only a tyranny can keep the lid on popular demand for a neutralist or independent foreign policy. Spain and Portugal are viewed as examples of the success and suitability for underdeveloped nations of national fascism wedded to economic growth.

(Concluded)

... (From *Pakistan Forum*, Canada)

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Book Review

INDIA'S MONOPOLY PRESS

By Sumanta Banerjee
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A commission appointed by the Government of India to look into the working of the Indian Press about a score of years ago concluded, on the strength of evidence before it, that a paper owned by businessmen or industrialists would adopt editorial policies that would advance the interests of moneybags in general and/or the particular business interests or commitments of its proprietors. Not only that, when it comes to news items, it would just throw the norms of objective reporting to the four winds and load them with the philosophy of the primacy of private capital. To arrive at exactly the same conclusion, Mr Banerjee makes a cross-section study of the reporting of and editorial comment on certain major 'events' in the Indian political scene during the years 1969-71 published in the major English dailies. The author calls it 'content analysis'—the aim of which is to draw qualitative conclusions from quantification of the incidence of certain items or items in the field of research. Evidently this method is a brand of piecemeal empiricism which is bound to give a distorted image of the reality.

Each of the nine sections or chapters in this book bristles with quotations from editorial pieces or reports about "major" issues like the choice of the President-elect, bank nationalisation, privy purses and the mid-term poll. The papers quoted are the Delhi editions of *The Statesman*, *The Indian Express*, *The Hindustan Times*, *The Times of India* and *Patriot*. The quotations bring home the fact that while the first two spared no pains to underline the precipitous outcome of Mrs Gandhi's economic 'adventurism' and political 'expansionism', the last one found each and every move by Mrs Gandhi one definite

step after another towards 'socialism' and lauded every act of hers to the skies. The remaining two steered a cautious middle course. By the time of the mid-term poll, *The Statesman* and *The Indian Express* almost suggested that the people of India had found out Mrs Gandhi and decided to ditch her and her henchmen, while *Patriot* harped that the people had discovered in her person their real leader. *The Hindustan Times* and *The Times of India* slowly gave up their neutralist posture to veer round steadily towards Indira.

From the appendices, we learn that while *The Statesman* was controlled by the Tatas, Martin Burn, Guest, Keen & Williams and Mafatal, *The Indian Express* was owned by the Goenkas and Dalmia. *The Hindustan Times* was owned by the Birlas and *The Times of India* by Sahu Jain. Therefore while the four major dailies are controlled by top monopoly houses, *Patriot* is an exception in that its principal shareholder is no monopoly house but the Dr A. V. Baliga foundation. Hence its news presentation and editorial comment were different. For example, on the eve of the mid-term poll, against the bitter anti-Indira stand of *The Indian Express* and *The Statesman*, and the cautious, sit-on-the-fence attitude of *The Hindustan Times* and *The Times of India*, *Patriot*, Mr Banerjee says, was able to give a more objective picture of the developing situation. What was the situation? The author says that the situation was one of "vast upsurge that had swept across the country against the vested interests". The author wants us to believe that Mrs Gandhi was leading this phenomenal upsurge. This is where the radicalism of Mr Banerjee leads us.

That apart, he raises more questions than he answers. The questions are: (1) Why did the monopoly houses differ on the issue of the Congress party split and Mrs Gandhi's rise to power? (2) Why did *The Times of India* and *The Hindustan Times* swerve from

their initial, anti-Indira line to a cautious and careful pro-Indira one? (3) How far did Mrs Gandhi's regime change the government policy towards the monopoly houses? (4) How far did our people really care for such measures like bank nationalisation and abolition of privy purses? (5) In what sense could Indira's rise to power be at all called a 'change'?

Mr Banerjee does not answer any of these questions. He is only happy to chew the old cud: a paper is after all the mouthpiece of its owner. Because the newspaper business is a highly capital-intensive affair, the owner is more often than not a monopoly house. Hence a paper and voices the interests of the monopoly house that controls it.

Coming to the analysis of two major English dailies published from Calcutta, Mr Banerjee shows how deliberately proceeding from false information, they raised the bogey of *Statesman*, were working in the night Calcutta just to undermine the Government in West Bengal. These two dailies then, particularly *The Statesman*, were working in the interest of Indira and her Congress. "Whatever else the Indian monopoly Press might be accused of it can never be charged with inconsistency"—says Mr Banerjee. Unfortunately we cannot say even this for him. He is remarkably silent on the issue of the spring thunder in Naxalbari and the reaction of our dailies to that. This silence is very eloquent. It perhaps also explains why he underplays the white terror let loose in West Bengal by the Government in the wake of the peasant revolt in the State and the way the newspapers prepared an elaborate excuse for that.

Mr Banerjee makes much of a minor contradiction between the Government and the monopoly houses or rather between the comprador-bureaucrat capital and comprador capital and completely ignores the real and major contradiction between our masses and the combine of the above two. J. P. C.

Chocolate-cream Hunger

BY A FILM CRITIC

THE idea of filming *Ashani Sanket* was hatched about a decade ago. Since then, it had been going in and out of the director's contemplation because many problems stood in the way of its realisation as reported by Satyajit Ray (in many of his interviews)—the problem of getting a suitable actress for the principal female role, the problem of shooting in the villages, the problem of the director's pre-occupation with his urban films and on top of everything may be the director's own hesitation about the right moment for making the film. During the food movement in 1966, asked about the necessity of recreating the 1943 famine when an identical crisis was menacing the country, Satyajit Ray replied that right then the thing would be too close to lend an element of objectivity in approach and so he would prefer to do the film at a later date. But it seems a sort of poetic justice that when the film at last comes to us, the spectre of 1943 is again rearing its head. Prices are spiralling, hunger and death stalk the countryside and Calcutta pavements are fast filling up with crowds begging for food. The thunder is not very distant.

The original story of *Ashani Sanket* is more a prognosis of the 1943 disaster than a picture of the disaster itself and the film is rather faithful to the spirit of the original despite some minor deviations in detail. The village is established in the title sequence through some beautifully-composed static shots, imparting a kind of "Sonar Bangla" quality to the images. The characters are simple peasants and the family of Gangacharan, the only Brahmin in the area, is regarded as the guardian angel of the villagers. Gangacharan thrives on small deceptions and he quite relishes the awe and reverence of his neighbours and proudly

flaunts his importance to his wife Ananga, a woman of nymph-like charm and paragon of human virtues. The first half of the film is a cameo sketch of the locale and the characters, and the accent is on Gangacharan and the tricks of his trade. But gradually the sleepy village wakes up with a rude shock when reports of rice-shortage come from outside. The small, sheltered world of Gangacharan gets a nasty jolt. The danger soon hits the village. Rice becomes scarce; begging and borrowing do not help. A woman coming from another village dies of starvation and the film ends with the shattering realisation by Gangacharan and his wife that somebody could die of starvation. The last shot shows a procession of famished millions slowly filling up the screen.

Satyajit Ray's unerring eye for detail, his keen sense of proportion and his usual restraint in depicting events and emotions, the spontaneity of his visual style, in fact all his artistic virtues are again reflected in this film. The slow, lyrical temper of his familiar style has given way to a staccato rhythm and the scenes never lose dramatic intensity even when they are stripped of false theatricality. Intense also are the moments of personal drama, the genial, light-hearted manner in which the tender scenes between Gangacharan and his wife are handled, or the tense, agonised moments when the outside world invades the idyllic charm of their intimate life. The colour is very pleasant to look at, specially the change of seasons has been captured with a rare mastery, registering each subtle nuance of the change with magnificent effect on the screen. The pastoral beauty of the landscape has also come off with splendid effect. Not much, however can be said about the use of colour to

achieve a particular psychological effect, or to highlight the changing moods in the film as can be seen in *Kanchenjunga*. As the film shifts from its gay, half-comic mood to sombre, sad tones, the colour does little to reflect the change excepting the telling use of a few silhouettes as presages of doom. Nor is colour artistically used to emphasise the tonal difference of the skin to accentuate the gap between the social classes, the Brahmins and the people of low origin (this was part of Satyajit Ray's intention for using colour, as expressed by him in a recent interview). There is also some self-conscious, over-indulgent and purely decorative use of colour, like the parade of a red sari amid lush green, or the blue shirt of Jadu contrasted with the red bricks, which are fine to look at as pieces of formal designs, but ultimately adding nothing much to the content of the film.

Soumitra Chatterjee stands out brilliantly among the individual performers in his portrayal of Gangacharan, his odd mixture of craftiness and tender feelings, his pangs of conscience when he has to stoop to anything to get a bagful of rice and his final, helpless surrender to destiny, all these difficult shades of his character are beautifully conveyed through his sensitive acting. In fact, Soumitra Chatterjee's Gangacharan perfectly embodies the archetype of the common man, the first and easiest victim of all socio-economic disasters. But in spite of his outstanding achievement, the handling of other characters is not always effective. Babita looks and sounds false with her chocolate-cream bearing and urban diction (it is surprising why the director has not put dialect into her lines while Soumitra's dialect rendering is remarkable and there is no indication of Ananga's urban upbringing) and the minor village-types lack the authentic touch. Only Sandhya Ray and Gobindo Chakrabarti manage to invest their roles with some credibility.

Form and Content

But a Satyajit Ray film cannot just be let off with a mere academic discussion about its artistic virtues or drawbacks. When Ray makes a film, a certain level of formal excellence is taken for granted and the assessment should not be limited to a listing of cinematic qualities which must always be there in the work of a master like him. And when he makes a film about an important social issue like the 1943 famine the content becomes as important as the form itself and the film should be judged in its totality, by the achievement of the ultimate goal, the harmony between form and content. And this is where *Ashani Sanket*, in spite of its isolated moments of artistic greatness, fails to have any crushing impact on the viewers as a social document. Now what has gone wrong with the film and what has happened to its maker who in the past gave social sagas like us the Apu trilogy?

In his latest film, Ray has gone back to the village as he has again chosen Bibhutibhusan to be his source-material after a considerable gap of time. But between his first and latest feature film, many things have intervened, changing his entire attitude. He has become much inhibited in his approach, much too chary of showing life in the raw, trying to avoid the seamy side and the ruthlessness in portraying both the objective and the subjective world which made the trilogy so much real, shredding off the romantic sweetie-pie of Bibhutibhusan's original outlook has gone out of his system. *Ashani Sanket* betrays Satyajit Ray's airing obsession to beautifully everything, to mellow down every emotion and to stretch his theory of understatement to a dead end where actions and situations lose their rationale or motivation. From the very beginning when Ananga looks at some bombers and compares them to some beautiful storks gliding across the sky to the last sequence when the procession of famine-stricken people

looms on the horizon and Ananga disclosing her pregnancy to her husband, her flippant attitude completely washing out the tragic effect of the momentous last shot, the film constantly tries to tone down the effect of the impending catastrophe and soak everything and everybody in a kind of dewy-eyed innocence. During the first half, this approach goes in tune with the material, but in the second half, this is definitely disturbing and the harmony between form and content is lost. This tendency of pretification has a disastrous effect on characterisation also, and even the tragedy of a village woman selling her body for food lacks poignance, the village women's search for food in the jungles becomes a sort of picnic excursion, the final death and the erosion of human values when a girl steals food from the dead turns into a dumb affair. There are attempts at introducing sordid elements with a vengeance, such as the looting of the grainshop which is badly staged and does not serve any effective purpose and an attempted rape scene that is thoroughly redundant, except, maybe, for the director's desire to smear the screen with the streams of Eastman colour blood. Even the use of titles, headlines and newsphotos to indicate the price-rise and the advancing famine fails to click, because it does not originate from the basic approach, which is an idealised picture of pastoral Bengal and the gleaming embellishments of the surface hide the complexities and the grimness of an agonised society.

Commenting on Sukhdev's *India '67*, Satyajit Ray once said that he was not much interested in Sukhdev's accent on the contrast between rags and riches in a developing India, but he was fascinated by the subtle excellence of the visual details brought alive on the screen by Sukhdev's camera and editing. This attitude, often the easy escape for the ivory-tower aesthete, colours his own approach in *Ashani Sanket*. In his preoccupation with formalistic

exercises, he skirts important social issues, avoids making statements, taking sides. But when you make a film about a major social event, mere observation and reporting are not enough, reflection and positive assertion of your views are also imperative. When Ray announced plans of making *Ashani Sanket*, all hoped that this time he would use his consummate artistry in a truthful and stark recreation of an important chapter in our social history. We all hoped that we would again find the man who stood with his head high leading the silent procession in memory of the food vement martyrs in 1966. But the procession has marched forward. The leader has straggled behind.

A New Talent

The essence of the classic comedy is derived from the anomaly in the human condition. Chidananda Dasgupta in his feature venture *Bilet Pheral* has taken a big risk in choosing a true situation which has become worst of worn-out cliches through current use. He has based his film on a comic treatment of the predicament which three young men, characters of the three khilafes stories in the film, find themselves on their return from abroad. Dasgupta has been able to lift conventionalised formula-mate from the level of mediocrity by a sophisticated approach to the subject, enlivening it with flashes of visual and verbal wit. He has not pilloried his characters, nor has he put them on a pedestal. He has focussed the real dilemma which one faces on coming back home after years of absence in the West, a feeling of a peculiar void, a sense of non-belonging, the attempt at re-identification and bridging the gap between the past and present orientation. The director has done it well through a combination of an intelligent comedy-manners, a stinge of black humour and some creative piece of boisterous

Paritosh Sen's Exhibition

SANDIP SARKAR

PARITOSH Sen's exhibition at the Birla Academy from 14th to 27th August showed us once more that at fifty-five he is full of youthful energy, ideas, exuberance and versatility. The exhibition was on a big scale, having mostly large and medium size canvases, a lot of superb drawings, gouache and few specimens of graphics. Over and above this there was a mechanical contraption called "The Toy". A paper-pulp man, looking like a very aged version of Paritosh Sen, was made to ride a cycle by pressing a button. Every one stood gaping, thrilled to the core, for this was found much easier to understand than Paritosh Sen's painting.

In this exhibition Paritosh Sen has changed his theme but nothing fundamental besides. He has developed the path he set out on, and widened and metallised it. He is fascinated by the imagery of cyclist and motor-cyclist, the frenzy of speed, the dashing bravado, the cynical carelessness for one's own life and that of others, the blind competitiveness of racing on wheels, the loss of balance and the accident of falling down. He is attracted irresistibly by the men on wheels and their reckless daredevilry becomes a symbol through which he wants to comment on the social issues. It is these men's blind passion for speed, action and effort at self-projection (at the bottom of which is an insecure feeling about their masculinity) that draws Paritosh Sen to them. He uses them as symbols to comment on the senseless violence that grips men periodically at the individual as well as national and international levels.

It is interesting to note that when the wheelers have recognizable faces they look like the very image of Paritosh Sen. There are one or two exceptions. The rest do not

the delicate textures of the indoor scenes (a commendable feature-camera debut by Dhruvajyoti Basu, a Poona Institute alumnus) and a sparing, but effective use of music have added to the impact of the film. The bull-chase sequences could have been better staged and the pointless Paris flashback scenes, made more horrid by crude back-projection devices, should have been cut out altogether.

The principal character of the second story is the music minded, America-returned town-planner and his *bête noire* is the washerman's donkey who disrupts his nightly listening sessions of classical Western music by demonic yelling. There are moments of roaring laughter as the hero chases up the donkey to the tunes of Mozart's aria or his tenacious persuasions of the washerman requesting him to train up his donkey as a human being, but on the whole this film has a halting pace, repetitive situations and a distracting tendency towards fake social satire which fails to go with the director's conceptual framework.

The director's social comment has come out most effectively in the third episode which describes the miserable plight of an Oxonian who, after a couple of stints at some respectable jobs, has set up the independent business of supplying blood for making fertilisers. He has not divulged the nature of his business to his family, a bunch of conservative aristocrats who would turn him out of the house if they ever learned the truth. Everything goes well but monsoon becomes the monster and the problem of storing and drying the blood stares the hero in the face and the business becomes a real "bloody" one. The hero is ultimately defeated and reconciles himself to a cushy executive job. The portrayal of the hero's struggle to build up a future for himself bears the director's concern for realism and the delineation of the final collapse of his dreams pointing to the economic realities of the big fish swallowing the small ones highlight the film-maker's sense of social purpose.

slapstick. He has been successful in making the two trends, the traditional comedy and the slapstick meet on a common ground. The slapstick comedian is always menaced by some inanimate objects; the furniture and the gadgets to him represent the anomalies of his situation. The traditional comic hero is also haunted by contradictions in the shape of some absurd incidents. Dasgupta has placed his protagonists in some anomalous situations and to infuse the slapstick element into his narrative pattern, he has introduced some concrete objects, the bull, the donkey and the food as the representations of those anomalies. The result of this complex experiment is a breezy screen experience and when the average Bengali cinema is in a rut, it is a pleasure to welcome a new talent.

The hero of the first episode is a Paris-trained painter trying to relocate himself into the Indian situation and to adjust with his moody and modish wife. A part-time painter and a whole-time advertising designer, he often feels lost in the new set-up. But a bull which chooses to chase the couple whenever they are on a scooter-ride, changes everything for him. To manage his wife who threatens to quit him unless the bull is got rid of, he goes out to meet different people and the experiences he has give him a feeling of involvement both in the outer objective world and in his private, emotional world and the bull becomes the catalytic agent in this process. So much so when the bull is packed off to some distant place, both feel a sense of vacuum. The intimate, domestic scenes, the couple's little quarrels and squabbles and the ultimate reconciliation have been treated with maturity and restraint and with requisite flair for visual elegance. The evocative photography, specially

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Bhadra,

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have identifiable faces. It seems as if Paritosh Sen is trying to come to grips with his own violence and that of others, trying to understand it.

The drawings are done in loose flexible lines which seem to have the spinning movements of the wheels, not having rhythm so much as a kind of motion. The whole movement of the wheels takes up the total canvas and the spatial interludes are often few and far between—signifying the mad obsession of motion and speed. On the other hand each individual seems to be left with no emotion or empathy. The wildness of self-centred life and passion moves them on, leaving no room for introspection or interpersonal relationship. To emphasize this Paritosh Sen has madly dipped his brush and covered the canvases with riotous colours—vermillion, yellow, blue, sage and sap green, violet, all manifest their brilliance and one wonders whether the theme of violence thereby becomes a bit too sweet.

Paritosh Sen is a mature and powerful artist, capable of doing so many things. Indeed, the tricks are at his finger-tips. Moreover he carefully takes note of all that is happening in other art centres around the world and he is able to assimilate them into the structure of his own style. However, with all his gifts Paritosh Sen somehow does not overwhelm the viewer at the deepest level. In fact it even seems that when someone is moved by an experience, crudity of expression does not stand in the way. Paritosh Sen, on the other hand, is very sophisti-

cated and charming, able to express what he sees and feels, but one comes away from this exhibition with mixed feelings.

And yet one must admit he does not paint pretty pictures, paint to guile prospective buyers. He is unlike his contemporaries in Delhi and Bombay who are in the picture-making trade. However, he has one similarity with them, he has seemingly rejected tradition and been won over almost completely by Western norms of art. It might be said that he belongs to the 'intelligentsia', a word derived from Russian which means Western-trained intellectuals who felt alienated from the Russian society and government of the 19th century. Today social scientists use the word as a tool to explain confrontation of Western and non-Western cultures. Toynbee describes the intelligentsia as a "class of liaison officers who have learnt the tricks of an intrusive civilization's trade..." I think probably, the term intelligentsia might be helpful in understanding Paritosh Sen and certain other artists in India today. They have assumed the role of being "born to be unhappy" and their strength and their weakness may well spring from this. It is the total rejection of their artistic heritage that isolates them and forces them to grope for an individualistic expression that would convey their experiences.

In this context it might be asked whether the men on wheels have any relevance to the total Indian situation, whether the imagery is forced, and to a large extent unreal, for how can these men on wheels represent the teeming millions of Indians who eke out living below the subsistence level? The only relevance they might have is to the Westernized Indians—they are hardly Indians. I think this is the reason for Paritosh Sen's partial failure in spite of his sparkling brilliance.

Clippings

Fighting Drought

The people of Hsiyang county North China curbed the worst drought in their living memory by putting up a 50-day stubborn fight this spring. They completed sowing of autumn-harvested crops according to plan and luxurious crops now carpet the terraced fields.

The drought lasted 17 months this country in central Shansi province. Following an unusually dry year, no snow or rain fell in the five months of this year. Many sections of the country's five major rivers had dried up by the time the 1973 spring sowing started there was no water in the smaller reservoirs. Eighty per cent of the land, most of which is loess hills, was too dry for sowing.

The drought was a severe test for the county. It had to choose between the two alternatives: wait for rain and yield to nature to fight it squarely. Acting according to Chairman Mao's revolutionary line, the county Communist Party committee decided to mobilize the people to fight the drought, relying on their collective strength.

Although the county's 1972 rainfall was only one-fifth of normal, the county achieved a good harvest averaging 7.09 tons per hectare after a protracted struggle. The county party committee cited this in calling on the people to continue the battle for another good harvest this year.

Cadres from the county down to the commune level joined the campaign to move water from rivers, wells and water holes to fields. A steady flow of trucks, tractors, hand carts and pushcarts transported water along motor roads. Men and women carrying buckets of water on shoulder poles filed into long queues up hillside footpaths.

The watchword was: "Save every drop of water to the fields."

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achieve a full stand of seedling exclamation".

...In order to sow one mou of land (15 mou to a hectare), the people had to bring in at least 200 buckets of water. That meant 100 round trips with two water buckets carried by shoulder pole for a total of hundreds of kilometres. The figures show the revolutionary determination of the people.

While mobilizing the people to fight the drought, the county party committee asked the party organizations at all levels in Hsiyang to see to it that the people would have adequate rest and eat well. It decided that there should be two hours of rest for the commune members every day after lunch. It also stressed that soya beans should be grown well since noodles made of soya bean and maize flour are a local favourite.

At meetings held on the Chieh-tu commune to discuss ways of coping with the drought, poor and lower-middle peasants put forward many suggestions and asked the commune party committee to "turn difficulties into a motive force" and lead the masses in overcoming the dry spell.

The socialist system and the collective economy stand us in good stead even in years of natural disaster. We will do all we can to fight the drought, however great the difficulties of exclamation" they vowed.

In the campaign to criticize revisionism and rectify the style of work, the Hsiyang county party committee has led the people in repudiating the trash that history is created by a handful of heroes, an idealist notion spread by Liu Shao-chi and other political swindlers that brands the masses as a mob. This has raised the people's political consciousness and increased their confidence. As the cadres put it, the anti-drought battle is a proof that the labouring people armed with Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung thought have immense strength and wisdom.

This battle was not a defensive one. New irrigation facilities were added, thus laying the foundation

for further progress. The people in Hsiyang last year completed more than 1,000 irrigation projects, enlarging the irrigated area by 1,280 hectares. This spring they built irrigation facilities for another 800 hectares.

(Hsinhua)

Another Countryside

Comrade Ivan Prihodko was nearly beside himself when he jumped off the Kharkov train at the whistle stop. His native village where he was going to see his parents after a long absence, like so many Ukrainian villages, straggled along a single lane for miles parallel to the railway line one mile away.

The fields between were planted with winter wheat, now nearly ripe for harvest. On the other side of the line was a cement factory. What took Ivan aback was the appearance of the fields.

The waving grain was criss-crossed by a myriad of footpaths as though each individual minded peasant family had beaten a separate path from their door to the railway and the cement factory beyond, where many of the village people work.

When Ivan asked why there was such a multiplicity of paths, the laconic answer was, "We have no other way of reaching the railway and the cement factory." Later putting the editors of the newspaper *Country Life* in the picture, Ivan asked indignantly: "Why could not the factory provide its workers with a single footpath so as not to trample underfoot the most precious thing men possess, namely bread?"

...Other cases from far afield were cited by the paper. A telegram from a remote area of the Urals complained that private cattle owners captured their cows in the wheat and corn fields and nobody did anything about it, despite stringent laws. There were other complaints of tractors, lorries and even combine harvesters being driven through the ripening grain.

These many instances highlight

one of the main difficulties the Soviet regime must cope with reducing waste through human carelessness. Much has been done since the days about a decade ago when a car could be driven hundreds of miles over threshed grain spread on the paved roadway to dry. But much remains to be done to prevent loss not only in the fields but also in transportation and delivery. (Edmund Stevens in *The Times*, London).

Letters

'Voices Of Revolt'

Abhinava Gupta places some questions before the revolutionary writers and poets of West Bengal (*Frontier*, 18-8-1973). "If they are so indifferent to poetry as a craft why do they choose this medium? If they do not believe in depth of feeling and thought, originality of imagery and diction why should they practise? Cannot their purpose be served much better by pamphlets and handbooks? Is it not sheer creative vanity that leads them to waste paper and other materials in composing such stuff? Do they not waste their time too?"

In his 'New Democratic Culture' Mao Tse-tung says, "All the new political, new economic and new cultural forces are revolutionary forces in China (in India—A.M.) and are opposed to the old politics, old economy and old culture. The old things are composed of two parts: one is China's (India's—A.M.) own semi-feudal politics, economy and culture and the other is imperialist politics, economy and culture, with the latter leading the alliance. All these are evil and should be completely destroyed. The struggle between the new and the old in Chinese (Indian—A.M.) society is a struggle between the new forces of the people—the various revolutionary classes—and the old forces of imperialism and the feudal classes."

Mr Gupta's standpoint on the new

forces and their culture is quite different.

We should welcome all sorts of new forces engaged in making revolutionary culture. We should of course discuss and criticize the revolutionary culture, for its growth and development, but never condemn it like Mr Gupta.

Mr Gupta wrote, in an article, 'Screams across the Cornfields'. "It appears Ram Basu responds to the political scene of the last few years with sympathy and a feeling of loss. His thoughts and feelings are both individual and common to all." But the poem, 'Do not wail' is a reactionary one. Ram Basu's *Kanamachhi* is not at all progressive. When the revolutionary class of Indian people was fighting against the tyranny and oppression of the ruling class, and we all know such revolutionary fighting is bound to be bloody, Ram Basu laments the bloodshed, 'smell of blood haunts my solitude', i.e., happy middle-class solitude. When the revolutionaries were fighting their political enemies, Basu writes, "...a mad killer leaps out of my own heart and slays me." Like all the escapist poets Mr Basu finds his last resort in nature. "What else can salve my wounds except love? What else but purifying plunge into the depth of eyes of another: what else but this, can return me to Nature?" Rightly Mr Gupta admits that Basu's feelings and thoughts are 'individual'. It is not class feeling but individual, and 'common to all'. The comment is a paradox. We know class feeling. But we do not know that such feelings and thoughts are common to all, i.e. classless. Can a 'revolutionary' critic like Mr Gupta explain how classless, common-to-all feelings and thoughts are possible in a class society?

Mr Gupta admires overwhelmingly the works of Kamal Mazumdar. He wrote in an article (*Frontier*, July 21, '73), "Thus of all modern Bengali writers, Kamal Mazumdar alone is able to feel *man's exile and futility* (italics added) and evoke

the feeling... But already he has achieved something in his stories which is extraordinary and rare in Bengali... And he succeeds more than any other Bengali writer."

Is Kamal Mazumdar a progressive writer? Does he portray the will of the people? Does he write for the people? Is his language easily understandable? No. Then how does a 'revolutionary' critic comment that Kamal Mazumdar is an extraordinary writer, a successful writer? How does he speak of man's—classless man's—exile and futility?

On the contrary Kamal Mazumdar expresses, in an antique vocabulary that is not understood even by educated people, thoughts and feelings that coincide with those of the imperialist and feudal rulers. He, however, serves the comprador and the feudal establishments.

Mr Gupta's statement goes. "The old middle class was stronger breed though under 'foreign domination, whatever the reason, and its cultural products were much better, counting among its cultural leaders writers like Madhusudan, Bankimchandra, Rabindranath, Saratchandra and Manik Banerjee."—(Voices of Revolt). From where does Mr Gupta learn that Rabindranath belonged to the middle class? We should reassess the roles of Madhusudan, Bankimchandra and Rabindranath. Otherwise we cannot lay the foundation stone of a revolutionary culture. As regards the political role of *Char Adhyay* Rabindranath proved himself anti-national while the national struggle for India's liberty was on.

Let us remember Mao's doctrine, "Imperialist culture and semi-feudal culture are affectionate brothers, who have formed a reactionary alliance to oppose China's new culture. This reactionary culture serves imperialism and the feudal classes, and must be swept away. Unless it is swept away, no new culture of any kind can be built up. The new culture and the reactionary culture are locked in a life-and-

death struggle: there is no construction without destruction, no release without restraint and no movement without rest."... "Some works which are completely reactionary from the political point of view may yet be of some artistic merit. But the more artistic such a work may be, the greater harm will it do to the people, and the more reason for us to reject it."—(On Art and Literature).

We have to reject the reactionary culture of our heritage and also of the present time. Without rejection there can be no attainment.

But Mr Gupta praises reactionary authors like Kamal Mazumdar, reactionist poets like Ram Basu and lauds the ideal of Rabindranath. He fails to realise the growth of India's revolutionary culture, always ponders over and stresses form neglecting the content. This is why his view is one-sided—subjective. He poses to be a 'revolutionary' critic, offers his advice to progressive writers just like 'Marxist', but all this is futile. That he is a reactionary critic is clearly revealed in his article, 'Voices of Revolt'.

AJIT MUKHOPADHYAY
Calcutta

How Many Notes ?

Refer to your editorial *Another Anniversary* (August 18). When Mahatma Gandhi came to power, the note circulation in the country was around Rs. 4,800 crores and the same now Rs. 5,591 crores (15th August 1973) and not Rs. 10,000 crores. The comparison between the rise in prices with "doubling of money supply" therefore becomes baseless.

D. G. BOKSAR
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