

frontier

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HORSE-PLAY

THE country was expecting the Prime Minister to give a call for a crude revolution on the lines of the green revolution; instead she went to her office in a horse-drawn cart. Which shows that she can beat professionals in every field—even the Air-India admen or the cartoonists of India. But it also shows that she has grown tired of intellectual clownism and for a change is trying physical, which may not be good at her age. Her petrol policy had a good possibility, raising price to bar its consumption. Who says that she is by the rich, for the rich and rich herself? Petrol affects only the rich and therefore a price-rise in petrol is of no consequence to the millions below the poverty line. But she made a mistake: any rise in transport costs is bound to be reflected in food prices and the merchants of India will see to it that the prices of things which have no relation to petrol whatsoever go up in no time. They have gone so already, on a scale that cannot be calculated by any mathematics. Where did it go wrong? Is it possible that the PM does not know that she has no control over the racketeers of India? The history of the past 26 years should have told her that after the unique generation of black money in India. A generous interpretation of the whole thing is that, even if she is not herself a part of the racketeers (Sanjay Gandhi's Maruti project notwithstanding), she relies much too much on public stunts. A simpler way to curb petrol consumption could have been to ration it without a price-rise. Not that rationing would have made the merchants shy of resolving the difficulty by a price hike of every other commodity—but, it would have made a lesser scandal.

The PM's propensity for psychological stunts cross the limit when she was led to increase the price of kerosene on the plea that it was much too cheap and a prohibitive increase was necessary to check its use for adulterating diesel. Countless villages would be much darker now. Let us hope that she would not order cessation of paddy or wheat production altogether because racketeers are hoarding paddy or wheat.

Maybe we are hoping too much. The nationwide furore over the preposterous rise in prices will subside after a while. A country cannot live by strikes alone. There was a Delhi strike, there will be a Calcutta strike, a Bombay strike, a Bangalore strike and then leaders

will get down to the serious business of personal politics. People will also learn to live with dearer and dearer prices—what else can they do? Some honest brokers will expect that people oppressed with inflation will spontaneously explode into revolution. Meanwhile administration-wallahs will find many explanations why this thing and that could not be done because of this and that. For example, the police can jolly well say that they could not help the procurement drive because they had no transport to keep the vigil after the order of restriction on the use of fuel. But that would not debar them from helping the jotedars in reaping the corns; an extra expense in petrol would be amply recouped by the obliging jotedars.

'The Worst Is Over'

Optimism marks the utterances of the Prime Minister. Notwithstanding the current dismal going of the economy, Mrs Gandhi expressed the view that the growth rate of the economy, which is flagging at the moment, would soon pick up, since the "worst is over". She held out the hope that with the prospect of a better crop this year, the country would soon make a better showing, resulting in the development tempo again picking up to make up for the lost ground.

The Prime Minister would like to live in a dreamland undisturbed. Does she know the simple fact that despite last year's encouraging crop production millions of people in rural areas remained half-starved because of hoarding and corrupt procurement policy which failed to collect even 50 per cent of the targeted 8 million tonnes? Does she know that this time too those who sabotaged her much publicised procurement policy and State takeover of wholesale trade in foodgrains are again working overtime and are backed by her policy makers? In West Bengal the rice procurement target has been fixed at 500,000

tonnes this year out of which 3.5 lakh tonnes will be procured through rice mills under the supervision of government officials and volunteers of the Youth Congress. The Youth Congress, in response to an appeal of the Chief Minister, Mr Sddhartha Sankar Ray, and the Food Minister, Mr Prafulla Kanti Ghose, is mobilising its 50,000 workers in village areas to help the Government's procurement drive. We all know who own rice mills in village areas and what kind of relationship they have with the ruling party. They are the least worried over the decision to post government officials and volunteers of the procurement committees, mostly local Youth Congress members, in the mills to supervise their activities during the procurement operation. They know how to come to an easy understanding with these greedy elements. While selection of Youth Congress volunteers is being carefully done under the direct supervision of the State Food Minister, posting of government officials in mills after thorough screening has just started. As on previous occasions, under these circumstances the procurement operation will keep avenues open for the landlords and rich peasants to escape untouched. With the police, YC volunteers, mill and government agents preparing to carry on the operation the victims would be none but small holders and poor peasants. This has been the past experience and there is no reason to believe that it is going to change.

Last year's procurement in West Bengal was a disastrous failure; and the current operation is about to repeat that woeful performance. The entire public distribution system, which has hitherto fed, however inadequately, millions of poor people, is likely to break down. The various agencies to help the procurement 'drive' are meant to earn money for them. No fresh employment prospects are there. So help the unemployed earn some money in dubious ways. To have a finger in the pie, rival youth organisations are

being set up. When Mrs Gandhi says the worst is over, she perhaps means that the best is yet to be for her supporters.

Through The Back Door

The delicensing of investment to Rs. 1 crore announced last week marks another major surrender of the Government to the mounting pressure from organised industry. Quite expectedly the decision has been sought to be explained in terms of an apparently impeccable economic logic. The most important reason quoted in support of the move is the steadily deteriorating industrial growth rate. The Industrial Development Minister, Mr Subramaniam, of the green revolution fame, has conceded that the trend in the current year beginning April has been far from satisfactory and that somehow the targets seem to be all falling apart. The delicensing measure he has projected as the only effective recipe for the developing crisis. But the reasoning has some obvious flaws. First, New Delhi could not have certainly any illusion that the smallscale sector, which is supposed to be stimulated by the decision, has come up to expectations. Its growth is being systematically stifled by the lax units and unless the entire industrial and administrative set-up is changed, it will never be able to come to its own. Liberalisation here and concessions there cannot just give the small sector the momentum that the government seeks to be looking for. Even if it does, let us submit for argument's sake, the total effect on industrial growth would be minimal. The pace of industrial activity in India is decidedly set by the large-scale sector and till it has shown more dynamism, there cannot just be any improvement in the overall picture.

What it all amounts to therefore is a further concession to big business through the back door. Take

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the case of the mini steel plants. These are supposed to be reserved exclusively for new and smaller entrepreneurs. But what is happening in effect? All these plants are being financed by big houses, though only indirectly. In fact, smaller investors hardly dare to put their money in an investment so risky as this. Only the bigger sharks who have usually contributed to election funds are taking up the offer, hoping to make quite a few crores in the next two or three years till a scrap famine leads to a raw material crisis. It is a kind of quod pro quo for big business given by the Government. And some thing is going to be reaped after the delicensing of investment up to Rs. 1 crore. It amounts to an open invitation to the larger houses to expand through benami deals and elbow out the few remaining genuine small entrepreneurs. A rather strange type of socialism.

Year Of Russia ?

Correspondent writes :

The Europeans may try to forget the way they were treated by the U.S. Government just before the ceasefire came into force in West Asia. But doubts about the American overlordship will not disappear. Besides, the energy situation, a result of the measures announced to the oil-rich Arab States, is beginning to look pretty serious. So the West European powers, including Bonn, will now gang up behind the USA to back Israel. The Americans may announce some troop withdrawals, both as retaliation and as a measure to ease the declining dollar. Strains in NATO, the Atlantic alliance, are anti-tingled. This has been a major Russian objective.

our sole agent in Bangladesh

HALANTIKA BAIGHAR

Banglabazar

1973]

NOVEMBER 10, 1973

Politics Of Domination —A New Style*

SHEKHAR GHOSH

THE Nixon-Brezhnev summit which concluded in Washington on June 25, 1973, preceded by a good seven days' talks in a remarkably cordial atmosphere, is a turning point in post-Second World War politics.

The two military giants, who have divided the post-1945 world more or less into two halves, facing each other on this or that issue with the uneasy air of enmity, are trying to compose their long-standing differences and are, for all practical purposes, beginning to give new interpretations to their respective national interests. On this new orientation of the Russo-American outlook on mutual relations, Tass wrote: "It would have seemed fantastic not so long ago to predict that the American Chase Manhattan Bank would open in Moscow, that Soviet cars would be displayed at an American exhibition, that a Russian luxury-liner would sail for New York, and American cosmonauts would study Russian." Really it would have. But now, in addition to the SALT and Mutual Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) negotiations, the Russians and the Americans are engaged in a host of unprecedented joint ventures. Thus, the two veritable enemies of the post-war period have opened up new vistas of mutual cooperation on matters hitherto unprecedented.

But the big question is: why such hobnobbing after indulging in mutual rivalry for a quarter of a century? The present approach by

* This article was written in the third week of August. For some reasons timely publication was not possible. In its present form, virtually no attempt, except a scant mention of the recent flare-up in the Middle East, has been made to bring it up to date.—Author.

The spectre of a crucial oil shortage is also haunting Japan. Unless there is a quick settlement in West Asia, Japan will begin to face a crisis, dependent as she is for nearly eighty per cent of her energy on the Middle East. She may be forced to look to Siberia for her future, forgetting the islands still occupied by the Russians. The Chinese dislike this prospect, as the talked-about pipe line will, for a considerable stretch, run along her frontiers, where the Russian strike force looms large. A deal over Siberia with Japan will be a big diplomatic and military victory for the Kremlin.

True, there is growing suspicion in West Asia about Big Power machinations. But the Arab States depend on Russian arms and spare parts and have to go along with the Kremlin in the near future. All roads last week seemed to lead to Damascus, where the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr Kaznetsov, had stationed himself. What the arrivals and departures of Arab heads of State mean is not yet known. The speculation is that, unless the Israelis withdraw to the first cease-fire line of October 22 on the west bank, which they violated, encouraged by instant deliveries of ultra-modern U.S. weapons, the Arabs will fight again. The Egyptian Third Army cannot be allowed to remain as hostages. Whatever the course of events, they will for some time to come, help Russian diplomacy. There is nothing like fighting by proxy.

The USA continues to have great potential for mischief with a man like Nixon as President. He has covered himself with mud but thinks he can tough it out. Maybe some Americans still think that he should not quit in view of the Middle East crisis. But can a man who is now an object of ridicule tackle the situation? He may resort to dangerous ventures just to prove that he is indispensable. The myth about his indispensability is, however, not confined to some of his fellow countrymen alone.

America and Russia has been prompted by a number of developments, which, both the powers are convinced, necessitate a complete reversal of cold-war diplomacy. The prolonged American exercise in futility in Indochina has left an impact on the White House as well as on the Pentagon, under the spell of which the Americans have become aware of their inability to score outright military victory while the Vietnamese people get continuous material and moral support from Russia and China. Politically, Indochina taught Nixon two lessons: that B-52s would not do what he wanted militarily, and the American people could no more be duped on the issue.

The impact of the Vietnam war on the American economy was staggering. That was another lesson. The Pentagon has put the cost from 1965 to the end of June 1972 at \$102059 million. This diversion of resources led to an adverse balance of payments in foreign trade, inflationary conditions in the American economy marked by growing unemployment, high prices and finally, devaluation of the dollar. Moreover, competition with Japan in foreign trade appeared for America as a battle of attrition. Further, Britain's entry into the ECM last January meant, for the sponsors of the Marshall Plan, yet another spectre on the front of international business and finance. There have already been successive crises confronting the dollar. Thus, American capitalism, already beleaguered from different quarters and apprehensive of more setbacks, required something to heal its sores and this could be provided only by a diplomacy of detente. Thus Chase Manhattan could open its branch in Moscow and American corporations rush to Russia for digging gas and oil deep in Siberia.

In Western Europe Willy Brandt's preoccupation with Ostpolitik and the strengthening of West Germany's economic ties with the Soviet Union were another indicator for Nixon. This will continue to have

an adverse effect on the consolidation of the 'Community Countries'. But Ostpolitik was a definite factor in Kissinger's assessment of European political reality, especially when French assertion of independence is as staunch as it was. On the home front the showdown between the Presidency and Congress, particularly after 'Watergate', has resulted in a weakening of the executive under the impact of which (it is being forced to scale down not only in Indochina but also in Europe in the form of American troop reductions in NATO. The dilemma of the situation is that if West Europe does not exist as a strong entity, there is no substitute for American power to counteract the Soviet Union. And Soviet superiority in conventional weapons in Europe is already in sight. At the same time, the U.S. defensive shield has become an unwieldy financial burden. Despite repeated American demands, the West Europeans—with monetary reserves twice the size of America's—are disinclined to contribute more towards NATO funds. Further, under the magic spell of 'Pan-European vistas', particularly after Britain's entry into the Common Market, West Europe is sliding towards neutralism. The present vigour of 'East-West contact, as shown in the Helsinki talks, bears testimony to this. In view of all these, West Europe is, to American eyes, not only an economic entity strong enough to effectively combat dollar supremacy (already a thing of the past), but also a political entity (however loose) to reckon with. Thus, reassessment of American policy became inevitable and that shows in the politics of rapprochement with the Soviet Union.

Again, the rift in the Communist monolith, more than the now hidden, now open disagreement in the Western bloc, has been a potent reason for the diplomacy of detente. The post-war task of America to contain communism by way of a worldwide military network is becoming anachronistic. At the same time, the

financial burden involved in the maintenance of her global network and military and other aids as well as to neutrals has sapped her dwindling economy. Despite sincere wishes, the staunch champion of capitalist democracy cannot hold back the tide until a breach in the socialist camp comes to give her the opportunity to exploit the same. (With rapid Chinese industrialisation and the development of nuclear and thermonuclear weapons, including short and intermediate range missiles. Russian apprehension of her neighbour came acute.) And that apprehension was converted into a nightmare for the American dialogue with Communist China. The Russian feeling of isolation as a result of this dialogue came frantic. Nixon, by pulling Brezhnev into his lap. This led to increased Sino-Russian bitterness and bettered the American security position. An agreement to relax tensions with the Soviet Union not only means much in terms of American sense of security, but also in terms of her manoeuvrability to tackle different issues the world over. Second, to Americans, the soft brand of communism appears fearful. Feverish propaganda against the Soviets by the American administration at the height of the war has produced very little result so far. Again, when there is nationwide controversy regarding a shortage in America and when American capital is trying to open up new areas for fruitful investment, it could do no better service to its election-fund contributors than to provide political insulation to the investments of American corporations in the Soviet Union. Along with all this, Japan's incredibly dominating position in the fields of technology and finance was definitely a factor of considerable importance in his bid to forge new ties with the arch-enemy of the cold-war period. America was aware, as the trade delegation told US businessmen in an unequivocal way that

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Some of United States confrontation applicable. Soviet Union certain exo uous by relationship in plained. days of the China was Not only of ideology, challenge to S in the she population and zest for pose of m Union for And that created m developme weapons a logic with in a world will gover tional ch in bound be at a Communist tate betw But if th appears t Union, t curity is a situati wards th closer re Mao an too, the unfavour Thus, a is the o Russian security preoccupa cessitate Europe. cided. tension achieve

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American investors were ready to
up in Russia would invite investors
from other quarters. And Japan
was the obvious alternative.

Soviet Compulsions

Some of the factors inducing the
United States to put her policy of
confrontation in the reverse gear are
applicable, more or less, to the So-
viet Union as well. Also, there are
certain exclusively Soviet compul-
sions by reference to which her part-
nership in the detente can be ex-
plained. Rightly from the initial
days of the rift, apprehension about
China was real on the Soviet side.
Not only in the Chinese orthodoxy
of ideology, and the resulting chal-
lenge to Soviet leadership, but also
in the sheer number of the Chinese
population, along with their capacity
and zest for hard work for the pur-
pose of nation-building, the Soviet
Union found the roots of her fear.
And that fear has been of late in-
creased manifold by the rapid Chinese
development of sophisticated nuclear
weapons and her starting of a dia-
logue with the United States. (Now,
in a world where balance of power
governs moves on the interna-
tional chess-board, the Soviet Union
is bound to feel, in power terms, to
be at a decisive disadvantage with
Communist China standing equidis-
tant between the two super-powers.)
How ill the super-power of tomorrow
appears to be hostile to the Soviet
Union, then the Soviet sense of se-
curity is outraged. And if, in such
a situation the Russians crawl to-
wards the Japanese, that would mean
a deterioration between Chairman
Mao and President Nixon. Then,
if the balance remains helplessly
unfavourable to the Soviet Union,
then, a swing towards Washington
is the only feasible option if the
Russians want to better their so-called
security position. Again, Russian
cooperation with the Chinese ne-
cessitated an easing of tension in
Europe. Fortunately Ostpolitik coin-
cided. It was felt that easing of
tension with West Europe would be
achieved. But such an under-

standing with West Europe would be
meaningful only if an understanding
with the USA could be reached. On
the one hand, understanding with
West Europe would mean for the
Russians an opportunity to bring
about more disconcert within NATO,
especially between Gaullist, France
and the USA, and on the other,
rapprochement with Nixon would
mean not only U.S. troop reductions
in NATO but also a lesser Ameri-
can presence in Europe.

There are also a number of domes-
tic compulsions. A perpetual food
deficit worries the Soviet leadership.
The Russians are clamouring for
more consumer goods. The Soviet
performance in the industrial sector
in recent years has been none too
encouraging. When the domestic
economic picture is all very grim,
the present leadership can by no
means effect any cut either in de-
fence expenditure or in the space re-
search budget. As Russia is in no
position to divert resources from de-
fence and space industries to agri-
culture or to the production of more
consumer goods and since she is in
no position to accumulate sufficient
volume of capital necessary for such
purposes by herself, she has got to
look for external sources. It is a
Soviet necessity to make Western
productive capacity work for her.
Otherwise she would not be able to
keep her house in order. Hence the
agreement with the United States for a
larger volume of trade and arrange-
ments for large investments by giant
American corporations in the Soviet
Union for exploration of oil and
natural gas, and also fertilizers to
nurture the ailing Soviet agriculture.

As in the cold war period the
weight of the influence of the super-
powers was felt in every corner of
the world, so will be the effects of
their rapprochement. In fact, the
future, all over the world, is most
likely to be affected as a result of
the recent Russo-American under-
standing. In the more or less bipo-
lar world of the past the small
States lived on the differences be-
tween the super-powers. The so-

vereignty of the small States is bound
to lessen further. The old-time
expectation of spontaneous support*
from one super-power in case of a
State's differences with the other
super-power is most likely to be un-
founded after the rapprochement.
Military vulnerability of the small
and medium States, the staggering
economic dependence of the under-
developed States on the big brothers
and the resulting political hopeles-
ness of them placed the super-powers
in a specially advantageous position
even in a divided world. With the
recent understanding between the
United States and the Soviet Union,
the relative position of these two
countries to dictate terms to others
is likely to be strengthened by all
counts. The fact that no agreement
on the Middle East impasse could
be reached during the summit, thus
keeping the Arabs and Israelis in
uncertainty may be a pointer. At
the fag end of the talks, Brezhnev
described the Arab-Israeli conflict as
a 'dark cloud' overshadowing the
successful summit. Likewise, the
unequivocal American condemna-
tion in tune with others in the Se-
curity Council of Israel for intercept-
ing a Lebanese civilian plane indi-
cated something. The Russo-Ame-
rican understanding has already pro-
duced a sense of helplessness in di-
fferent quarters in the form of a cre-
dibility gap.

Despite the declaration by the
super-powers on the eve of the
summit of their obligations to res-
pect their commitments to their allies,
despite the fact that the Russo-Ame-
rican relationship is not already all
sweetness and light, West Europeans
had the feeling that the two super-
powers might be cooking up major
deals behind their backs. French
apprehension was very much acute.
In fact, the more Europe looks at the
growing unity between the super-
powers, the more worried it becomes
over the shape of things to come.
The apprehension in West European
capitals that was generated by the
summit became all too manifest in
the recent concluded Helsinki talks.

* In this sense the world is a huge monkey
of power divided. 5

Kissinger's insistence on the so-called Atlantic Charter and America's repeated assurance of not letting down her allies have not so far allayed the fears of the Western allies.

The credibility gap is not confined to West Europe alone. In many quarters in South-East Asia the same apprehension is there and the feeling in many South-East Asian capitals coincides with the utterances of the Indian Prime Minister that India would not support any big-power diplomacy oriented towards carving out spheres of influence. Arab expression of bitterness against the detente was unequivocal.

Though Indian official reaction to the Russo-American detente is not explicit, New Delhi can no more neglect, despite the friendship treaty with Russia, the task of minimising her reliance on Soviet friendship. The process is already under way, as is manifest in India's renewed efforts to make up with Pakistan and her desire to normalise relations with China. Since China has sufficient reason to view the Russo-American detente as something like a ganging up by the two super-powers to carve the world into spheres of influence, she is most likely to step up her efforts to rally Afro-Asian countries in the UN General Assembly against American imperialism and Russian 'social imperialism' and also undertake the job of consolidating her position in Asia by moving closer to Japan and also India. Reaction of Hanoi to the detente was likewise marked by mistrust and a sense of helplessness. Even though Moscow is anxious to keep Hanoi away from Peking as far as possible, West European sources reveal a significant drop in Soviet arms supply to North Vietnam.

U.S. Aid

As a consequence of the detente, the area in which the impact of the change in U.S. policy is likely to be the most telling for the poor nations is foreign aid. So far the United States has given, in the form of foreign aid, tens of thousands of mil-

lions of dollars to various countries in all corners of the globe. Whatever the form of aid—humanitarian, subsistence, military, bribes, prestige, economic development aid—the purpose was more or less the same—containment of communism. In the post-Second World War period, foreign aid, as an instrument of U.S. foreign policy, stood only second in importance, next to her some 3,300 overseas military bases. Foreign aid was the congenial handmaid of the diplomacy of cold war. In the past twenty years or so a large number of underdeveloped countries in the three most populous continents have developed helpless dependence on U.S. aid. For many regimes the main source for the supply of both bread and bullets happened to be the USA. Yet no aspect of American foreign policy has created more controversy than foreign aid—both in the donor country and in the receiving countries. Eisenhower regarded foreign aid as the least understood function of the government. John Kennedy once stated that he would gladly discontinue foreign aid if he could. But he found he could not. Nixon realised that America could not impose on her economy the staggering burden of sparing billions of dollars every year in the form of extending foreign aid. The way out lies in an understanding with the target of 'containment' itself. The Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Fulbright, expressed the idea of revamping the entire U.S. foreign aid programme in the context of the detente. According to Dr John A. Hannah, administrator of the Agency for International Aid (AID), change in the U.S. policy of foreign aid is already under way. So long the presence of American aid has promoted the U.S. 'presence' in different parts of the world; now the very absence of aid is most likely to make the U.S. presence felt by many countries, precariously though.

There remains no ground for elation in any quarter over the pious platitudes uttered both before and

during the Russo-American detente.

It must not escape attention that despite all the talk about winding down of tension, determination of permanent peace, as well as the agreement to sign a pact by one year stipulating limitations on strategic arms, the parties have imposed no limit on their defence budget on further research for the building and perfecting of new weapons systems and so on. Both the super-powers are pursuing, hand in hand, a policy of vertical development of nuclear weaponry and at the same time discouraging horizontal penetration by way of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. What does this mean to the world, particularly when both the super-powers are so much aware of the political use of their nuclear stockpiles? It means, I think, the possibility of an unprecedented domination by the two nuclear giants in a new style. The idea can be expressed diagrammatically. Henceforth, we are most likely to witness a new pattern of international politics. The entire gamut of international relations may be placed in two side-by-side circles—in the one are the two super-powers; their mutual relations, economically, marked by cooperation, politically, by growing amity with occasional differences, and militarily by mutual suspicion and constant preparedness. And in the relations with the other circle, that is, with other nations, the United States and the Soviet Union are most likely to make propitious use of the political capital of their recently cooked up detente and the overwhelming military superiority. In that sense, the Russo-American detente not only heralds a new era for super-power domination in a new style, but also marks, since the main props behind the deal have been cold calculations of power (as we have tried to show) the end of whatever place ideology had in international politics and the ascendancy of power politics, or may say, to a new height.

The recent Arab-Israeli hostilities, which started on October 6 and

Allende : Casablanca Of Revisionism

ASHOK RUDRA

ALLENDE died for his cause, standing at his post. He did not surrender to the army generals, nor did he seek refuge in any friendly foreign country. In his last statement to the people over the radio, he said he would die fighting, to set an example to his countrymen. And that is how he died, gun in hand.

Allende, however, recalls another historic figure dying at his post—Casablanca. Not because of his refusal to leave the Presidential palace for safety—it would be doing injury to the memory of the great man to draw comparison at that level. But because of his until-the-last blind adherence to bourgeois legality. He died saying he would not budge from bourgeois legality. Not because he was a bourgeois democrat. But because of his blind faith in the creed of Peaceful Transition to Socialism. The army generals, the CIA, and the IIT are after all only the executioners of history. If Allende sacrificed himself, he did it at the altar of the great revision of Marxism that was undertaken by the conference of 81 parties in Moscow.

Here was a test case. A party committed to socialism as well as to the norms of bourgeois democracy, carried to power through votes. A party that wanted to bring in socialist and anti-imperialistic measures without establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat. What happened in Chile bears out to the letter the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism.

These tenets are that the ruling classes would permit the game of bourgeois democracy to be continued to be played only as long as their vital interests are not touched, that is, as long as the Socialist Party de facto continues to serve the interests of capitalism. If however such a party having come to power tends to forget that bourgeois democracy is a game to be played with the

spirit of cricket and starts to imagine that it could possibly be decisively used as an arena for class war, it would be refereed out of the field, with violence if necessary. This was the basic understanding of the State and Revolution of all Marxists until the breakaway of the reformists and the formation of the Second International. This understanding continued to be the corner stone of Marxism-Leninism until the time of the 81-Party conference, which decreed that under *changed world conditions* a peaceful parliamentary path to socialist transformation had once more become a possibility, at least in some countries where the conditions are particularly favourable. The crucial point here is, "the changed world conditions". What are these changed conditions? The change in the balance of power in the world, it was said. From the position of being the dominant power, imperialism is on the defensive. The powers in the ascendancy is that of socialism. Three-fourths of the population of the world live under socialism. The Soviet Union is invincible in any war. It has got its H bombs and nuclear submarines to match the military might of the United States. Economically the Soviet Union will catch up in some 20 years or 80 with the U.S.A. And so on.

There are obviously many who follow the logic here. But there are others who cannot. The present writer is one of those who, from the very time of the 81-Party Conference, from before the development of the differences between the Soviet and the Chinese lines, found difficulty in following the train of logic here. Of course the changed balance of forces in the world arena is a reality. But my difficulty all along in understanding has been, how this change is relevant in so far as the establishment

have been brought to a halt by joint Russo-American diplomatic pressure both within and outside the Security Council, was not only an acid test for the détente, but the manner in which the truce was secured (from the outset the super-powers were in close contact as to the developments in the Middle-East and two successive resolutions oriented towards securing truce were, for the first time in history, jointly sponsored by the Soviet Union and the United States) also bears testimony to the fact that the détente will be made to work as a congenial tool to determine the shape of things to come in a significant way.

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of socialism in a particular country is considered. For the latter it seems what is relevant is the *balance of class forces internal to each particular country*. The military capability of the socialist bloc (assuming for the moment that there is such a bloc ready to practise proletarian internationalism) would be relevant in preventing a country with established socialist power from being over-run by external forces of reaction. If a socialist country is engaged in some sort of armed struggle with some external forces, then these external forces could be countered with socialist military might. The socialist military might could also prevent the onset of such a struggle, by the threat of retaliatory action. The argument would be illustrated by protagonists of this line by the examples of Cuba and Vietnam. Cuba could be regarded as an example precisely of Soviet capitulation before imperialism, and doubts can be raised about the actual volume of Soviet aid to Vietnam; but we shall concede, for the sake of argument, that it is socialist military might that is preventing the Americans from overrunning Cuba and dislodging Fidel Castro, and that but for Soviet military help the Vietnamese would not have been able to humble the imperialist giant. These are however not examples of socialism being established in countries hitherto under the domination of reactionary class forces through peaceful means, thanks to the changed balance of forces in the world. Cuba and Vietnam are certainly not examples of socialism being established through the ballot box.

Domestic Reaction

As a matter of fact, for socialism to be established through votes, one is counting on the reactionary forces abdicating power, giving up without a fight. After all, socialism means expropriation of the propertied classes, and the idea that just because the socialist bloc has got thousands of nuclear warheads or their bureaucrats having more of Italian made

private cars, the property-owning classes would accept to be liquidated is to bank on a desire for suicide of the propertied classes. When Marx and Lenin thought that the propertied classes would not agree to commit suicide and therefore considered dictatorship of the proletariat to be unavoidable they were not thinking of external forces. They were thinking of domestic reaction. They expected domestic reaction to resort to violence, throwing to the winds the facade of legality and democracy. There could of course be at all times external help to domestic reaction, just as there could theoretically be external help to the domestic forces of socialism, once there is a socialist bloc. But the primary battle is between the two domestic forces. No changed world conditions seem to be there that make the Marxist-Leninist theory outdated in so far as this basic postulate goes, namely, that once the reactionary forces are defeated by the forces of socialism by constitutional means, the latter would resort to unconstitutional means. Unless the revolutionary masses are armed, unless the revolutionary party is prepared to crush reaction with violence, the nascent socialism would go under. How is the terrible nuclear might of the socialist bloc going to make any difference to this?

Obviously the believers see some fundamental difference being made. The non-believers would of course prefer to go by history. And the living history brings very little support to the revised thesis. The fact of the changed balance of forces did not deter the Indonesian reactionaries from massacring the Indonesian communists and pushing back socialism in that country by, maybe, decades. And there is this test case: Chile. The generals who killed Allende and made the parliamentary path lead the country to fascism seemed to be least worried about the changed balance of forces in the world. There has been a lot of talk about the IIT and the CIA having supported if not engineered the

coup, and they well might have. But to what avail has been the countervailing military (and economic—might of the socialist bloc). The Soviet Union has broken all diplomatic relations with Chile. That seems to be giving precisely little headache to the generals who have assassinated thousands of people, arrested hundreds of political refugees, and are combing the country for the important Left leaders.

The protagonists of peaceful transition would perhaps say that they have never considered that they would not resort to violence if it resorted to in the first place by reaction. In other words, their programme is to stick to the constitution until the last, and resort to violence only if reaction does so in the first instance. They may point at the assistance offered by the Chilean workers. But two important points are here. First, one cannot organisationally prepare for war and peace at the same time. A party that organises itself over years for parliamentary practices, a party that has to constantly assure the non-proletarian class allies that it has no intention of ever doing anything unconstitutional, is not in a position to organise itself for insurrectionary warfare when such a war is imposed on it, as has been imposed on the Chilean socialists. The second point is, there is indisputable advantage to the side that strikes first. The theory of proletarian dictatorship is that of the imperative need of the socialist forces striking first and doing so with crippling effectiveness.

The burning events of Chile throw light on both the points. If the revisionist leadership of the Chilean CP had prepared the organisation to go underground at a moment's notice, then the general secretary of the party would not be caught so soon, let alone the head of state having to die fighting practically alone (but for a handful of bodyguard). It is not only that the revisionist leaders did not strike the first blow. They waited indefinitely for reaction

strike the first blow. Not only they did everything possible to strengthen the hands of reaction and those of the revolutionaries. The writing on the wall was becoming more and more unmistakable as they dilly-dallied precisely with the very army leaders who were to become the butchers of the revolution very soon. Instead of taking steps to arm the people, Allende let the generals outlaw the carrying of arms. He let them carry out raids on workers in factories who were trying to arm themselves while he was still in power! Instead of taking the generals of power, he let them more and more by inducting them into his Cabinet. He was not buying time to prepare himself for anything—he was only being true to his creed. Until the end he kept saying, "I shall not take a single step that would be unconstitutional."

"Refused Ants"

The results of this policy of being a bourgeois democrat than a bourgeois democrat ever has been being seen in Chile today. The words of an eyewitness (the Chilean correspondent of *Le Monde*), who has been in the towns, these "antennae" of Allende, totally convinced, like ants outside anthills, "under the batons of the military." Those, that is to say, whose bodies are not being found every morning rotting in the streets, according to the same correspondent, "There has not been any organized resistance... The resistance has been and still is by general consent, a matter of individual stray voters." *Le Monde* quotes in support of this assessment one of the members of the President's non-professional bodyguard. The balance of force is as described by him: On the one side, the armed forces, counting fifty-five to thirty-eight thousand soldiers plus some fifteen thousand gendarmes and police. Another estimate by *Le Monde* figures much higher, at 100,000 in all. On the other, about 10,000 thousand fighters trained in

guerilla warfare... "Their leaders, mostly of the MIR, are safe and sound". It is thus only the extreme Left—the MIR—that is prepared to give leadership to the resistance. It was not easy for them to make their preparations under Allende's regime. Allende tried to use the machinery of the bourgeois State, counting on the co-operation of the generals, rather than win over the lower ranks—just as our Jyoti Basu wanted to consolidate communist power in West Bengal with the help of the Home Department and the Inspector General of Police. But while Jyoti Basu tried his best to crush the Naxalites, Allende only harassed the MIR. That leaves some hope for Chile.

It is only natural that the grim tragedy of Chile should provoke questionings and searchings in the ranks of the revisionists the world over, especially in countries where revisionist parties think that they are within reach of coming to power through constitutional means. Such a country is France. The French Communist Party which is preparing for the assembly elections of 1976, in giving a sharp and hasty reaction to the Chilean coup, landed itself into a first-class contradiction. Condemning the Gaullist Government for not condemning the putsch, Marchais, the General Secretary of the French Communist Party, said that was to be expected, given that the Gaullists themselves came to power with the help of the army. But by making this point, which caused a bit of a furore in the country the French Communists pulled away the carpet from under their own feet. For naturally, the programme of socialism through votes has this premise that such things as army intervention will not happen in France. France is not a backward country like those of the Third World; it has got an ancient tradition of democracy. Of course Allende also used to say that Chile was not like any other Latin American country—its army had a tradition of non-in-

volvement in politics, etc. Also the history of France precisely is of democracies being overthrown by violence and by threats of violence—the present French Republic is called the Fifth Republic. But the total confusion of the Communists and Socialists who are bidding for power under the leadership of the Social Democrat, Mitterand, is understandable. What else can they say but that they will see to it that France does not have the same experience as Chile?

Paradoxically, it is the right-wing Press and the spokesmen of the right-wing parties that are underlining the correct lesson. The general theme in their comments goes as follows, "You see, Socialism and Democracy do not go together. First you have unprecedented economic difficulties, then a bloodbath." (Incidentally, the economic crisis, engineered by foreign monopoly capital as well as the domestic medium and small capital, was not in any way made more easy to resolve for Allende by the fact that the Soviet Union proposes to catch up with America in economic strength). The French right-wing is doing and saying everything to make it clear that the same economic crisis and the same bloodbath would be there in France if the French vote Mitterand to power.

At a more sober level, French political scientists are once more asking themselves the basic question about the compatibility of a socialist programme and bourgeois democracy; and most of them are coming out with dismal answers. A typical example is Maurice Duverger, a liberal and a bit of a social democrat, but respected among academic political scientists. Here is what he has to say: "The Commune of 1871, the Fascism of the Thirties, the press comments on the Chilean coup d'etat, all go to show that the European right-wing would have analogous reactions under similar circumstances... As long as the Chilean Right believed that the experiment of the Popular Unity

Those Barren Leaves

ABHINAVA GUPTA

THANKS to Calcutta's well-known literary establishments there has been no scarcity of annual literary fare this autumn. Despite shortage of food and other essential commodities in the market the regular yearly boom in creative writing in Bengali that precedes the pujas has not failed us. All the famous Puja Numbers have come out—in costly and scarce newsprint. The biggest newspaper establishment in the language brought out two special numbers—one for its daily and the other for its weekly—perhaps in somewhat larger volumes than in any previous year. Other newspapers also brought out their special numbers on this occasion—a separate one for their weeklies or monthly editions, if any. Besides there are all sorts of specialised periodicals going in for a special puja edition, their specialities including sex, crime, fantasy, cinema and the like. Children's magazines, both of crude and refined types, carve out a place for themselves, the big establishment referred to above also bringing out its children's special number on the occasion. Rubbing shoulders with this rather run-of-the-mill stuff and jostling for space in the wayside stalls one finds a few aloof-looking, highbrow literary journals also in their special puja editions. And somewhat uneasy in such company, quite a number of serious political and cultural journals with obvious leftist bias claim your attention.

Such a spurt of literary output—albeit once a year—must bring a few extra rupees to the pockets of those who are concerned with its manufacture and circulation—publishers, printers, binders, hawkers, stall owners and, in the case of what I have called famous literary establishments, to writers too. Like people

on any other job the writers who sell their products to these establishments must have worked overtime to meet this seasonal rise in demand for their labour. They could not possibly have depended on inspiration in the old-fashioned sense and were given a run for their money, plodding away at it at the rate of something like two novels and four short stories a fortnight to earn their extra rupees. Of course, there have been a few fortunate members of their guild—the better known and more favourite ones—who have earned more for less work, by undertaking to write exclusively for this or that puja number. There is no reason, however, to believe that the popular writers who have agreed to turn out only one novel each this season for a certain puja edition must have written better than those who have been forced to write more. There has been no bar to the former's writing big stories, slightly shorter than the novels, and as many short stories as they like for other puja issues. The high earnings have been quite assured for accepting a certain voluntary restraint on creativity in some cases, but the improvement of product not necessarily so. In fact, when a popular writer is advertised as writing something, preferably a novel, exclusive for one puja number, only the writer himself and the journal in question stand to gain by the deal—one through the high price of his product, the other through increased circulation.

As for the readers' loss, they couldn't care less. Most of them do not know what good literature is. Those who do, cannot find it easily—not in any case among the pages of popular periodicals. It is these periodicals and their regular hacks

capital, whose 'absentee chief' happens to be a political party... would drive the point home. In one of its recent issues the weekly published a story regarding... corruption in the waterways... of a small Bihar town... the "political umbrella" offered... to the guilty official by some... local Netas (leaders). It appears that for some mysterious... the publication of the item... a local ex-MLA belonging to the... of the 'chief editor', who was... naturally enough, also the 'distribu... of the weekly. In the violent... that ensued between his poli... loyalty and loyalty towards his... bread had its edge over ideol... The news item was literally... out with the help of a... printing press. When distributed in... deformed form, it naturally... some curiosity among the... readers of the town. Now, there was sort of a move... against the corrupt official go... on in the area—jointly organis... by all the political parties ex... the one belonging to (yes, that... the correct expression) the con... political-cum-newspaper... Some procured a copy of... magazine from another town... the cat was out of the bag! There was a violent reaction in the... Next week the weekly received... scores of letters condemning the... and specifically blaming... politician-cum-agent for the... imposed censorship. Someone... sent a copy of the deformed... Another named the printing... in which this vicious work was... All of them urged stern ac... against the politician-cum-news... agent, who had not only... the weekly but also the... of your party." For all practical purposes, the... could have provided a good... issue to the weekly... which was all after 'scandals' and... exposures'. But instead of playing... the weekly developed cold feet... for not-so-mysterious rea...

who form the tastes of the readers, shape their expectations, pervert their sensibilities. The writers who contribute to these journals soon find themselves kowtowing to the vicious rituals of soul-destroying cult. They repeat the gibberish of Grub Street. As for other cultural influences in the land, popular songs on the radio and variety fare on the stage and screen make up a veritable witches' brew. Indeed if anybody wants to know about modern Bengali culture he need only stay in Calcutta during the pujas. The music at the pandals and the way it is purveyed through blaring microphones will tell him a lot about the aesthetic development of the people here. If he reads Bengali he will get to know about the literary tastes of the present generation more correctly by leafing the puja number of any popular periodical than by reading Niraj Chaudhuri's account of an idealised Bengali gentleman of a slightly older type. One thing will puzzle him though. He will find so many people spilling over and swirling all about him on pavements and in vehicles, around shops and amusement centres during the better part of the waking hours that he will wonder how any of them could find time to read anything, even a popular journal. His surprise will be the greater when he learns that most of these surging human waves are confined at certain hours of the night and early morning within a narrow space—roughly 3 or 4 persons to a small room—hours during which they are supposed to do any reading. Obviously in such circumstances there can be no such thing as a solitary reading of Dante which E. M. Forster snootily distinguishes as a characteristic aspect of culture. Nor in the busy, maddening streets of Calcutta is there anything resembling the marketplace places where Socrates argued with young Athenians. So, where do the Calcuttans devote themselves to cultural pursuits—their dwelling places and open-air haunts being what they are?

The colleges and universities are places for peddling dubious certificates for a kind of learning which does not pervert a university girl from admiring Fidel Castro as much as she does Dharmendra—the popular Hindi matinee idol. Brilliant IIT students are heard crooning Hindi-film songs and talking about silly Bengali screen hits with greater animation than about anything else. The public libraries are haunted either by borrowers of a later-day popular fiction or by scholars grubbing among books for materials for a doctoral thesis. The bars—no equivalent of Elizabethan pubs or taverns—are infested by intellectuals who think little and drink much, though hardly knowing how to do either properly. The coffee houses? Nothing like real conversation or social amenities are practised in these haunts of long-haired and bearded youths.

So all Calcutta's culture is concentrated in the pages of popular periodicals, especially in their annual puja editions. The advertisements put out by these journals for their special numbers claimed as much. Taken together with the spree on the puja pandals they sum up all that is best in our cultural life today. Writing about culture someone once remarked that it is something connected with a desire to preserve and communicate something derived from our enjoyment of classics. It derives from our love of a few books, pictures, tunes. The list of favourites may be made more inclusive or exclusive and vary, somewhat, but the attitude and approach remain the same. There is also a broad general agreement about those who matter. The correct approach is always based on a faith in something permanent and irreplaceable, unique and worthy of preservation in all that is best in man's cultural achievements. From this point of view, is there anything culturally important in the literary fare offered by the establishment journals? Like the clay images of the goddess whose annual worship

inspires the creative activity, they are objects of short-lived attention. After the four or five days of worship the images are thrown into the river. In less than a month the numbers are sold away with old newspapers.

True, even Bengalis are exhibiting an interest in collecting their own classics (witness the demand for cheap editions of old authors). But this may be more from a sense of duty and irrational veneration than anything like a true interest in the works themselves. There is not a thing as cultural snobbery and it is a good thing to be able to have a library of old Bengali authors at such a small cost.

A 'Reformed' Ishara?

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

IN *Haati-ke-Duani* B. R. Bhattacharya seems to be on a crusade against the self-styled guardians of the society's morals who are full of the vices they themselves are out to combat. The central character is a big business magnate who preaches against the excesses of sex and violence in the movies but is not ashamed of sleeping with the wife of one of his contractors in exchange of favours bestowed on him. Is he really trying to expose the campaigners against *Chetna*-type films? Maybe, but his attempts have been totally futile, because the film failed to generate anything but contempt for the inept and childish approach of the director. There are many same masallas, some worn-out clichés about father-domination with an old manure of murder and blackmail. There is not much exposure of the female anatomy, the familiar Ishara trademark and at first sight, one might think that he has turned a new leaf. But actually he has become cleverer in hoodwinking the censors, and the off-screen love-cooings, the *gilla* 'double-meanings' and suggestive angles are more vulgar than some

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Letters

Ishara?

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To Comrades

1. Let me congratulate Comrade Kanu Sanyal and others for their timely revolutionary letter (published on November 4, 1972 in *Frontier*). This is to register my broad agreement with the letter.

2. Responding to the call given by the comrades for self-criticism let me criticise myself unreservedly for my past as a CC member in the development of deviations in our correct party line. Proper self-criticism should be done through practice with the help of the lessons learned. The blood of martyrs is never wasted; time only will judge how we repay the debt of blood and evaluate our self-criticism thereby.

3. As for me, I never tried or will try to make out that I am a scapegoat of Comrade Charu Mazumdar. Admittedly, Comrade Charu Mazumdar's responsibility was bigger; but that can never be made an excuse for my own deviations. In order to establish the correct concept of the development of revolutionary authority that we learnt through our bitter and valuable experiences, we had to attack Comrade Charu Mazumdar politically. But that should not be taken as an attempt to hide our own responsibilities. As we had pointed out in

our document, the development of a thing is the result of its internal contradiction.

4. On the East Pakistan question, I still adhere to our previous stand. Communists all over the world should have helped the nationalistic forces in Pakistan in its just struggle to oppose foreign intervention and aggression. This is not in contradiction with the right of self-determination of the people of East Pakistan. The question was one of the relative importance of the two. Our stand was a principled one; nothing has happened to change the politics behind it. I still think that the concept of United Front against foreign aggression is a sharp weapon of Mao Tse-tung thought in the hands of the world proletariat.

5. A correct political line ensuring the formation and development of the PLA and base areas is still the prime necessity of our party. Today the problem of formation and development of the PLA is the problem of people's war in our country. Without the PLA our party and people are without the sharpest political weapon. As such the question of the formation of military command raised in our document was not a military question merely. The political aspect and the perspective should not be missed.

6. The question of mass movements and organisation should not be judged in isolation. The relationship between these two and the formation of base areas should be remembered and emphasised.

7. All possible efforts should be made to maintain the unity of the party. Irresponsibility of the leadership or impatience of the cadres on this issue is extremely dangerous and hence should be firmly resisted.

8. We should try to follow the tradition of carrying out the revolution until the last moment of life; this valuable tradition has been created by the blood of our martyrs including Comrades Babulal Pan-
chadri Krishnamurthy, Sushital Roy

Choudhury, Saroj Dutta and Charu Mazumdar.

With revolutionary greetings.

ASHIM CHATTERJEE
Hazaribagh

Padatik

Contemporary scenes, when they are examined politically, almost always bring extreme conclusions. And in the absence of sufficient documentation, as in our present history, such conclusions tend to project subjective reactions, even romantic, indulging quite often in fiction. Points made on contemporary scenes, therefore, are always found debat-
able.

Our film *Padatik* has provoked serious controversy. Some run it down as unobjective, motivated, superficial and sinister. Some find it quite valid, both artistically and politically. I, for one, watch and see and take lessons, battling against all romantic and stupid aberrations.

A certain "film-goer" (*Frontier*, October 20) having given his views against the film and having quoted from authorities has, at last, expressed his deepest concern for a mysterious fact that I am possibly acquainted with knowledgeable circles. Here I must not hide my emotion when I say that I have nothing but contempt for such personal attacks. It is unethical. And ethics is something which a true Marxist will value much.

"Why is *Amrita Bazar Patrika* so happy with the film?" asks the said "film-goer". Why, if I may ask, the suspicious "film-goer" is so angry with the film, as much as the *Statesman* and the *Anand Bazar group* are? It is silly, the logic of the "film-goer".

"Why", he asks, "is the film given financial assistance by the Film Finance Corporation and Dena Bank?" Why, I ask again, *Frontier* published Central Government advertisements against all kinds of violence at a time when, according to the "film-goer", the ML cadres "were definite-

ly not mere cannon fodder?"

I make (this submission—all this comes from a certain kind of romantic obsession which invariably leads to absurd and odd generalisations, over-simplified and crude.

I hope in future the "film-goer" will not chastise me for using the raw materials supplied by a huge Establishment called Kodak Limited.

MRINAL SEN
Calcutta

In *Padatik* Mrinal Sen has put special emphasis on four cardinal points needed for the people's democratic revolution in a semi-feudal country like India. These are (a) The existing class structure of our society should be overthrown. (b) This overthrow of class society can only be achieved through armed struggle with people's participation and not through peaceful transition. (c) In carrying out the people's armed struggle, extreme caution should be observed in isolating the enemy from the real friends of the revolution. (d) In mobilising the people in support of the armed struggle, the advanced cadres of the revolutionary party should politicise them through active participation in all forms of struggle launched by different mass fronts and organisations of the people. Any deviation will lead to total disaster.

Let people like A. K. Lahiri, Abheek Mazumdar etc, learn their Marxism first and grasp the real nature and characteristics of Indian revolution instead of hurling malicious attacks on a film like *Padatik*.

SRIJA SEN
Calcutta

Mrinal Sen's latest film *Padatik* has for obvious reasons created a stir in film circles as well as in some political corners. Much unnecessary wrath has been directed against the director. Some have even taken pains to discover a malign motive on his part.

To me the theme of the story is

14 + This filmgoer's by Prof. Salil Misra of C.I.T. College.

very clear. It is a story of a revolutionary youth who realises the reality around him, ponders over it, reads Mao and revolutionary literature and tries to find a correct way to fight against the enemies. He realises that without the masses—especially "workers, peasants and the middle class and women" revolution is impossible. Sufficient hint—which any intelligent filmgoer should understand—has been given about the form of the revolutionary struggle. Shots on the fight of the people of Vietnam and of some African countries (with the globe moving symbolically) have been projected on the screen. On the other hand the caricature of revolution made by the pseudo-revolutionaries is also implicit in the howls of the demagogues blown forth from the microphone in a Maidan rally, suggesting the utter nonsense of such speeches.

Mao has been quoted by the hero which suggests his reliance on Mao's way and thought. Mention should also be made of the last scene where the youth sits by the side of his mother's body—weighed down by grief but rejuvenated by the spark of his father's courage and advice—"Be brave"—at the time of his departure.

One fine quality of the picture is that in criticising the sectarian politics of the extremist party the spirit of its cadres has nowhere been undervalued.

DEEP NARAYAN MITRA
(P. N. Sharma) Calcutta

No Courtesy

On October 19 I was given an appointment at 8-30 a.m. by the Private Secretary of the Prime Minister, Sm. Indira Gandhi, in my capacity as the working president of the Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights. I reached Mrs. Gandhi's residence with all the necessary papers including four appeal to the Prime Minister with about three thousand signatures of the parents, relations and friends of political prisoners in various jails in

West Bengal and in police... I wanted to hand over the... to her personally on behalf... these signatories. However... not allowed an interview with... Gandhi. I waited for two... till we were called to the room... the Private Secretary who... that the Prime Minister would... see me. In front of us she... away in her car and I was... to leave everything with the... Secretary, perhaps to be thrown... to the wastepaper basket.

A similar treatment was... out to us by the West Bengal... Minister, Mr Siddhartha... Ray. At the height of the... summer, he kept us waiting... ly seven hours outside his... in the Assembly House. When... did call us in eventually, he... us to send individual cases of... tical prisoners for the State... ment's consideration.

I collected a sufficient amount... documentation and then made... appointment with Sri Subrata... kherji who was then Home... of West Bengal. On the... day and hour, I reached Sri... kherji's residence. However... Minister did not keep his... ment with me—he went off to... airport to catch a flight to... Although he walked out in... me, he did not have the... saying "sorry" for not having... his appointment. During a... quent appointment, I was made... stand in the verandah of Sri... ji's house.

This sort of behaviour is in... ed contrast to that of Dr B. C. R... Pandit Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri... Dr Shyama Prasad Mookherjee and... Dr S. Radhakrishnan. All these... ent people displayed impeccable... courtesy during the numerous... pointments which they were... enough to give me. When I went... with a delegation to Pandit Nehru... during the Assam language riots... 1960, he preferred to stand while... the members of the delegates... ladies) were given chairs to sit on... I also remember the day I went to

From to ask his help in the pre-
 sion of the transfer of women
 political prisoners to the Andamans.
 immediately sent off a telegram
 C. F. Andrews and Lady Jackson
 the wife of the Bengal Governor).
 a result of the poet's endeavour (as
 well as that of C. F. Andrews) wo-
 men political prisoners were not
 sent to the Andamans.
 We are now living in a supposed-
 free country; yet there are few
 ones to protest against the primi-
 tive savagery being inflicted on po-
 lical prisoners in West Bengal to-
 day. Have so many lives been sacri-
 ficed in the fight against the British
 to create an India where such bar-
 baric behaviour goes on with im-
 punity?
 KALYANI BHATTACHARJEE
 (Working President,
 Association for the Protection
 of Democratic Rights)
 Calcutta

A Lost Community

Gokhale, it is believed, once said
 what Bengal thinks today, the
 rest of India thinks tomorrow.
 Rammohun, Ramakrishna,
 Mahananda, Rabindranath etc.
 all Bengalis and were pion-
 ers in their respective fields, the
 Bengalis still think they are superior
 to others.
 The Bengalis cultivated this su-
 periority complex possibly because
 of a process of degeneration and decay
 setting in amongst them. For
 Bengal has not thrown up any
 leaders of all-India prominence. Even
 Mahatma Gandhi was the accepted
 leader of the country and Nehru
 the idol of the young Indians
 Bengalis did not accept them as
 national leaders but all the same they
 did not produce any one accept-
 able to the whole country. Gradu-
 ally we became isolated.
 The impotence of the Bengalis
 came glaring after independence.
 After 1947 West Bengal (or
 Eastern Bengal) was discriminated
 against by the Central Government
 but we could never ga-

ther the courage to revolt. We just
 cried and surrendered for small
 gains. Thus we came to be known
 as permanent grumblers and the
 authorities at the Centre knew that
 the leaders of West Bengal would be
 satisfied with crumbs from the table.

How debased the entire commu-
 nity can become was clear during
 the recent Pujas. West Bengal is pass-
 ing through the worst ever crisis
 since independence. The country-
 side is in near-famine condition.
 Everyday one reads of starvation
 deaths, of suicide due to hunger, of
 selling of children just for a morsel
 of food. Thousands are coming to
 Calcutta in the hope of living; we
 see them begging in the streets, go-
 ing from door to door or huddling
 in railway stations. During the
 Puja nobody could escape the hun-
 gry cries of hundreds for a chapati
 or a handful of rice, the sight of
 children in tattered clothes and hun-
 gry hands scrounging the heaps of
 garbage for food, if any. Prices are
 beyond the reach of not only the
 hungry but even of people of
 moderate means. The power crisis
 was acute and production in a large
 number of industries was affected.
 Educated and uneducated unemploy-
 ment is at its peak. Seventy per-
 cent of the people are below the
 poverty line. In such a critical situa-
 tion one could expect the Pujas
 to be conducted in an austere
 manner and the money thus saved
 utilised for some humanitarian pur-
 pose. The abundance of illumina-
 tion, the cost of decorations and the
 pompous immersion processions be-
 trayed the callous unconcern of the
 organisers. The vulgarity was all
 the more sickening because the or-
 ganisers were mostly youths. It was
 the youths who were drunk and made
 obscene gestures in the immersion
 processions. They competed with
 one another in the matter of illumina-
 tion and decoration. It is clear
 that the degeneration of the Bengalis
 is complete and there is hardly any
 sign of redemption.

S. N. Roy
 Calcutta

The Pujas

There was a time when it was a
 matter of rejoicing to meet friends
 and relations on the eve of and dur-
 ing celebrations of Durga Puja,
 Saraswati Puja, Kali Puja etc. We
 exchanged ideas, and renewed our
 friendship. But what is happening
 today? Young people go from
 door to door collecting subscriptions
 by threats and intimidation. People
 fear to disoblige them. I have seen
 how petty traders on streets are forc-
 ed to pay from their meagre earn-
 ings. It is time to rescue religion
 from the hands of these anti-socials.
 They have the least respect for reli-
 gion as is evident in the manner
 the pujas are performed. The man-
 ner is anti-religious, the stress being
 given on decorations, lights and the
 playing at random of light Hindi
 songs. It is difficult to understand
 whether it is a puja or an exhibi-
 tion. The use of mikes for days and
 nights even after the pujas are
 over is intolerable, but any objec-
 tion ensures further torture, the
 police remaining neutral. Lakhs of
 rupees are spent. There is no doubt
 that the ruling class and the admin-
 istration are patrons of such pujas.
 They want to misguide and corrupt
 and corrode the younger section,
 trying to make them forget their
 grievances and aspirations. Isn't it
 time the young people realised how
 they are used for evil designs and
 political gambles?

S. CHATTERJEE
 Calcutta

For *Frontier* contact :

BANKURA NEWSPAPER
 AGENCY,

Lokepur,

P.O. & Dist. Bankura.

Defend Prisoners

The Legal Aid Committee has been organised to defend all those who are being victimised for holding political beliefs dissimilar to those of the party in power. Our object is to defend such cases irrespective of the political ideology of the victims.

There are thousands of detenus and undertrial prisoners in West Bengal only. Innumerable cases have been pending since 1968-69. Despite reminders the police are reluctant to submit chargesheets and bail is being opposed stubbornly. If one is granted bail he is tagged to some other cases. Thus the prisoners are virtually denied any defence. The overwhelming majority of those who had to be released after the Supreme Court struck down Section 17A of the MISA, were immediately re-arrested.

There is great need to expand our work and the task before us is huge. We can hope to tackle it adequately only if greater co-operation is forth-

coming from all democratically-minded people not only in this State but in the whole of India.

We appeal to all democratic people :

To contribute generously to this Committee ;

To communicate to us all cases of political victimization in need of legal aid.

Cheques drawn in favour of Bina Banerjee may be sent to either of the addresses given below ; money orders, cash and communications to the office (2).

1. Bina Banerjee
Account No. 10816
United Bank of India,
Sealdah Branch,
28, Acharya Prafulla Chandra
Roy Road,
Calcutta-9.
2. Jayasree Rana
Legal Aid Committee
11, Old Post Office Street,
Third Floor,
Calcutta-1.
Visiting hours: 4-30 p.m. to
6-30 p.m. on weekdays (bar-
ring holidays).