

ARTICLE OF THE WEEK

INDIA AND CHINA

WAR ON HIGH

BY VARSITY INDIAN CORRESPONDENT

There is something disarming in the way Indians sometimes give evidence of an attitude, the summit of which was the Gandhian doctrine of non-violence. A friend of mine once went to a fashionable jewellery shop in New Delhi. In the process of helping him the only assistant went behind the big cupboard and at this point an enormous rat appeared in the front shop and took an observing position; there was no simple way of causing his retreat. The assistant returned but showed no signs of perturbation. You see, he said, we have a different attitude here towards animals. In December last year the infamous Goa action took place. The overwhelming cry in India was that of "end of colonialism." With some, however, there was a certain uneasiness; they really considered it a defensive action, Goa was to them more or less a Pakistani base. Nevertheless there was a characteristic pointer in the shape of a cartoon in the Times of India a few days after the affair blew over: an Indian clad in his long coat and cap, holding a little mouse at its tail, about to throw it into the dustbin.

But these examples must not be taken as evidence of duplicity. There is ferment in India; it has existed ever since XIX Century. There are two trends in Indian life, which, for want a better terms, have perhaps to be labelled as 'historic' and "modern". The modern trend is reflected in the republican constitution, in the federal structure of the country based on linguistic lines (even though one of the leaders fasted to death to achieve this end for his group), in the constitution which declares all religions equal. Modernization is complete with extensive planning. A good deal of this modernizing process stays necessarily on the surface. One of the better known elements, doing away with the English language by 1956, is an example of overemphasized planning; the question may be asked whether the English-speaking leaders believed in the feasibility of the measure at the time of adoption; but this shows how great was the pressure at that time. But there was, and there is a not very vocal, certainly not too conscious an opposition. Perhaps an example may be furnished by quoting Jana Sangh's newly created conservative party, statues, according to which an Indian must really be a Hindu.

Not long ago the existence of somewhat backward and aggressive elements in Indian nationalism were a matter for argument; too big, too complex a question. One might agree that the Pakistani problem was not of their own making. Indian writers point out repeatedly that in the past, after the establishment of the Muslim Empire in Northern India there was no religious fighting; Hindu and Muslim were in the process of national integration when the Europeans came. That long process had not been completed at the time — after the Mutiny, 1857 — when the British seriously started arranging India according to their own ideas — and they eventually left the partition into India and Pakistan as their final bequest. There is this dual opposition to Pakistan: there is the problem of Kashmir, a province populated by a majority of Muslims; there is, too, the principle of democratic, that is, secular government, that divides the two countries, India, unlike Muslim Pakistan, is that secularist country. But secularism agrees wonderfully well

with the non-dogmatic, non-missionary, perhaps agnostic Hindu religious atmosphere.

Kashmir is thus something else than a frontier dispute. Why should India have them? A glance at the map will suffice: a firm, unbending ridge of the Himalayas, and a massive block of land along the Ganges, the sea along the Deccan Peninsula. There are some outlying enclaves in the North but this a barren and inhospitable country, a belt of land which sufficiently provided a kind of frontier for centuries.

Thus the present conflict with China seems to be another bequest of the British rule, and of the Western influence in general. Leaving aside the merits of the MacMahon lines, created in 1914, this in the 1962 context has become as firm a frontier as the Himalayas. It is next to unbelievable that the Indian Government should throw away its non-alignment policy for the sake of that frontier. That it may have been awakened to the dangers of whatever long term policy China may have is another matter. But in the minds of the many, a piece of territory north of the upper course of Brahma-putra river has become a symbol of national honour. How otherwise to square the scramble for foreign arms, "the firm resolve of the Indian people to drive out the aggressor from the sacred soil of India, however long and hard the struggle may be" — a resolution moved by Mr. Nehru on the 14th Nov., and accepted unanimously by the two houses of Indian Parliament — and the professed and practised, non-violence and non-alignment.

This does not seem to be the time for unfriendly criticism. It is difficult to gauge how many Indians are sufficiently aware of the meaning of non-alignment on is difficult to gauge how many consciously connect a certain softness of Indians ways and a certain political line adopted by the Indian Government. Perhaps not many. It may be that defence requirements were treated lightly — not, possibly, by the Minister whose integrity may be open to doubt — but by the rest of the Cabinet. It may be that peaceful development, even a certain fascination with planning and progress, concealed before the minds of the Indian leaders the so-called realities of world politics, and this one is bound to add, helped to conceal some realities of the Soviet and Chinese ways. But principles of politics are not the principles. There is something noble in the general trend of trying to avoid to add to the existing tension, even though it may appear as washing of hands. This is different, in fact, from the noisy 'Ban the Bomb' campaign.

One may legitimately wonder if there is a particular group of persons among the Indian leaders which may be said to embody this ideal very consciously and very disinterestedly. For one thing—it is not easy to live up to it.

Thus, when Nehru says "we lived in an artificial world of our own creation," he really points out the many, who followed him because they thought the idea was right.

We deplore that Indian leaders did not wake up earlier. But now, an opposite, a harder note is being struck. "The sacred soil of India' has a XIX Century flavour. It is, we have to admit, another heritage of European influence. And there are bound to be errors, great errors possibly, committed in the process of changing the line. India failed to arm, and, possibly, to join the SEATO, because of the non-alignment. One could wish it had been a success. It was probably something the average Indian did not have to "live through." What is not, in the end, what is perhaps too easily acceptable, is the argument taken from not too glorious days of European nationalism. It is not only that India has answered the proclamation of national emergency with considerable spontaneity; it ranged from gold and jewellery donations of the wealthy and offers of a day's wages by workers to students demonstrations and assaults on Chinese shops, with the MP's declaring that there should be no negotiations whatever with the Chinese. The spontaneity of these gestures was overshadowed by repeated declarations by the Government that a prolonged struggle was to be expected—for years—with an ultimate goal of driving the Chinese from India. Perhaps most characteristic was the revival of the old (British-made) Defence of India Act, under which foreign nationals became liable to detention; this measure, newspapers pointed out, included the Chinese naturalized in India. One may doubt whether this was influenced by Chang-Kai-Shek's stand that, for once, Mao's ideas about the frontier were right. Perhaps Mao thinks that the frontier war will help him along with his "subjects."

There it is, nationalism all along. We have a struggle, the principles of which seem, to our mind, be drawn from the past. Already we have a share in it. It may remain a small share: delivery of arms and no thanks in exchange. It may be a bigger share, of which the U.S. had some experience in Laos, and a greater, if not only in Korea. But — it may be still bigger a share too.

MOVIES: Andy Osyany

TWO UNPRETENTIOUS BRITISH MOVIES

All Night Long is a jazz world version of Othello; with a liberal adaptation of the original story to the modern "beat." In the course of one evening, the title to the contrary, the chief antagonist brings his efforts to a head; attempts to break up the marriage of Othello and Desdemona (Rex and Delia) by manufacturing evidence of Desdemona's unfaithfulness. A minor victim of his machinations is a rehabilitated narcotics addict. The ostensible reason for Jago's desperate schemes is that he wants to set up his own orchestra: Johnny Cousin, the man with the drums is 35 years old and he is nowhere. However, in order to make it big, he has to sign up Delia (to get away from Shakespeare) who is a famous jazz singer in her own right. But Delia is too attached to her husband for whose sake she gave up her career. The marriage must be broken up. Simple? Plausible? Does lack of success spoil jazz musicians?

It was interesting to observe the parallel between Othello and All Night Long - to a point. That point was the climax, where, for some reason best known to himself, producer Bob Roberts chose to revive the victims of Rex's misguided wrath. This took the punch out of the whole movie, as far as I was concerned, all the more so because Patrick McGoochan's Johnny Cousin failed to impress me as a tragic character. TV's late Dangerman counted an inscrutable and immobile face as one of his chief assets; but in this movie the clever wooden-faced plump operator did not even try to "ensnare" our sympathy. Generally speaking the acting was of a mediocre order and that is a pity. With capable direction and more attention to the screenplay this movie could have made a name for itself in spite of its limited budget.

Advertised as following in the train of Carry On Nurse, Peter Roger's production of Twice Around the Daffodils aroused deep antipathy in me. However, I am glad to say that the childish buffoonery and disgusting slapstick of the Carry On series was not in evidence at all. The story concerns the convalescence of six men in a TB sanatorium for a period of about a year. Two of them find their true loves in the ward, one learns to play chess, one miner becomes so reformed that he wants to be a dishwasher in his wife's establishment on his release; and a not-so-gay bachelor returns to his quiet life with his not-so-bright spinster sister. The wolf (whose recreational life is but inadequately covered) departs without a clue as to where he is going to go next. In British tradition the play is frank, even in the Halifax edition; but, mind you, pleasantly so. The acting is better than average, possibly because characterization rather than creative personifying was called for. In any event I met some familiar types and because the roles were not overplayed I had an enjoyable time.

David Susskind's latest production "Requiem for a Heavyweight" is not the "gutsiest motion picture ever made" and any such claim is clearly preposterous. What this movie does offer is a frank look at the people living in the unreal world of the boxing ring. After seventeen years of fighting the once near-champ has had it. His left eye is seriously injured and his fighting capacity is considerably below peak. Don't make a mistake though, he is still tough enough to stand seven rounds of a pretty gruesome bout, thus surprising his own manager who betted on the fighter being laid out in four rounds. Now that he is finished with fighting, the future is anything but encouraging. He cannot be a movie usher because there are no uniforms to fit his oversized frame. One other job, that of a camp counsellor fails to materialize through a combination of happenings. Eventually our hero ends up in a wrestling establishment, dressed as an Indian chief.

Of course there is a bit more to the plot. This much would not be enough even for Susskind. I very much doubt whether this movie is going to win any awards in Hollywood. It might do better with the New York critics, but that is immaterial. "Requiem for a Heavyweight" is the type of movie that should be offered to the public more often than the outrageously silly "sex-comedies" which are unloaded on us without respite. There are two memorable things about this movie; one is the superb photography work in the opening scene (the last fight), the other is Anthony Quinn's perfect portrayal of the soft-hearted (and utterly soft-headed) heavyweight. He is a man who goes through life without understanding what it is all about, who is incapable of realizing to a satisfactory degree what is happening to him. Indeed one is sorry for him most of all because he is not a fully conscious responsible being.

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