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The Editor,
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Bombay 400 038

Sir:

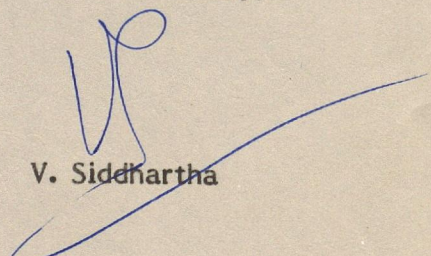
In "Emergence of the Intelligentsia as a Ruling Class in India" (EPW, Jan 21, 1989), Ashok Rudra asks: "how does the intelligentsia, without any property base, become a ruling class?" (emphasis added). This crucial question is not answered satisfactorily either by himself, or in the next article by Beteille. Bardhan, in the article following, comes close but doesn't quite put his finger on it.

The answer, surely, is that the intelligentsia is, almost by definition, the owner of Intellectual Property(ies). Increasingly larger proportions of the title to these properties enjoy monopoly privileges protected by the State. These properties fetch, depending on the transactional modes, market conditions, and the applicable law, a variety of rents; as also 'tribute' and 'status' type of non-monetary rewards which are valued by the upper reaches of this class. A variety of Trade Secrets — which latter come well-within the legal definition of intellectual property — is owned and traded-in by the bureaucracy.

Thus, intellectual property embodied in the intelligentsia and their produce is, in fact, the factor of production which acts as one of two indispensable mobile cementing factors between the other three. (The other is energy). There arises, as a result, a whole political-economy of intellectual property.

Incidentally, the list of those who comprise the intelligentsia will be significantly deficient if the officer class of the military is excluded. The Air Force and the Navy are now largely dependent on mental skill; the Army is becoming increasingly so.

Yours faithfully,



V. Siddhartha

LETTERS TO EDITOR

Propertyless?

IN 'Emergence of the Intelligentsia as a Ruling Class in India' (January 21) Ashok Rudra asks: "how does the intelligentsia, without any property base, become a ruling class?" (emphasis added). This crucial question is not answered satisfactorily either by himself, or in the next article by Beteille. Bardhan, in the article following, comes close but doesn't quite put his finger on it.

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V. SIDDHARTHA

New Delhi

Suppression of Academic Freedom

WE, as members of the academic community, would like to register our protest against the violation of academic norms and suppression of academic freedom by the management of the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune. We understand that the management of the Gokhale Institute has humiliated K K Dasgupta by refusing to allow him to associate with the institute after his retirement. Since Dasgupta is an academician of international repute, this petty action is rather more a loss for the institute.

It is deplorable that, instead of fostering positive collegial relationships within the institute, the director deemed it fit to ask Dasgupta as well as other senior staff members for an explanation for not being on their seats at a particular time. Instead of respecting Dasgupta's response of not considering himself accountable to the director for his movements within the institute, orders were issued for complete severance of Dasgupta's relationship with the institute after his retirement.

Such incidents, if allowed to go unchecked, will vitiate the atmosphere in the academic community. Democratic relationships between the administrative heads of institutions and senior academic staff are necessary for maintaining high academic standards. Directors should not be allowed to treat academic institutes as their fiefdoms, and demotivate their staff by treating them as serfs. Even on an assembly line, the severity of the action on such petty grounds would smack of vindictiveness, but in the context of an academic institute it will completely vitiate the atmosphere.

We urge upon the management of the Gokhale Institute to reverse expeditiously its decision and restore the dignity of the institute.

Javed Alam, V B Abrol, Biplab Dasgupta, Dhairyasheel Patil, S M Javed Razvi, A S Raur, K C Suri, C N Rao, K R Mohandas, Ashok Acharya, S S Chatha, Zahoor Siddiqui, Sadasiva, Rasheedudin Khan, Kulwant Rana, Bharati Mukherjee, Tirthankar Chattopadhyay, Bhupinder Brar, K K Pathak and T R Sharma.

Swaraj

SWARAJ is a group of persons who have on various occasions been to India/south Asia, and who have got in touch with activists, social action groups and mass organisations. The major aims of our activity are: maintenance and strengthening of such transnational contacts; generation and dissemination of counter-information to the prevailing image of India and other south Asian countries in the media; critique of the established development strategies and modernisation models.

The fundamental consensus between us is the right of self-determination (swaraj) of each individual and each community. In this context we give special attention to the position of women and children and of minorities. Recent developments such

as the New World Economic Order have taken up 'basic needs' as a central development issue. But the right of self-determination, in this case the self-determination of the needs, remains of minor importance. In east and west, more and more people have become critical of such developments. Our point of departure in this movement is: to criticise a social system that is only interested in economic and industrial growth; to criticise the established power structures.

We believe that a radical change of society is necessary in the western world as a precondition to end neo-colonial relations with other countries and regions of the world. We are linked with the social movements in West Germany. Our contacts with groups in south Asia are guided by the principle: communication must precede co-operation.

Swaraj is organising a workshop on Religion and Liberation in south Asia from July 14 to 16 in Heidelberg, West Germany. If you happen to be in Europe then, we shall be happy to receive you and extend our hospitality.

JOHANNES LAPING

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