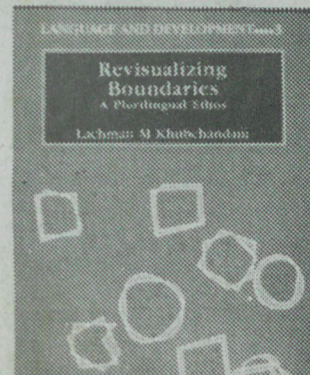


BOOKS RECEIVED

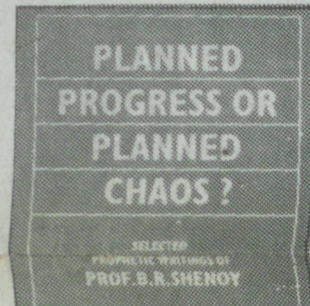


Resistance and Reform in Tibet. Edited by Robert Barnett and Shirin Akiner (Motilal Banarsidass; Rs 245). This book seeks answers to the questions "what is it (in Tibet) that has survived the thirty years of isolation, and what will it become?"



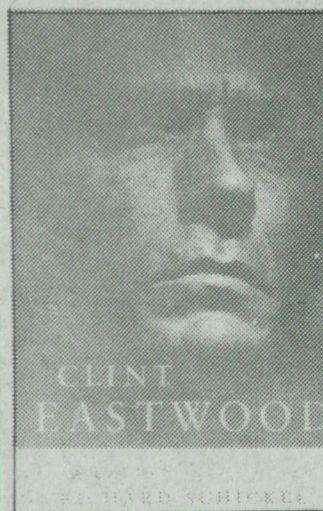
Revisualizing Boundaries: A Plurilingual Ethos. By Lachman M. Khubchandani (Language and Development—Volume 3; Sage; Rs 335).

The papers collected here "set an agenda to probe into the contours of plurality consciousness in the studies on language, and to focus on the strengths of complementary methodological orientations..."

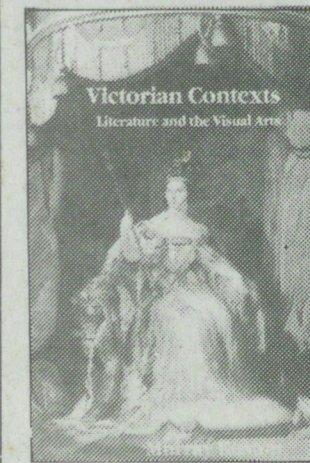


Planned Progress or Planned Chaos? Selected Prophetic Writings of Prof. B. R. Shenoy. Edited by Mahesh P. Bhatt and S. B. Mehta (EastWest Books; Rs 300).

"By training and by conviction", the editors write in their Preface, "Prof. Shenoy was an economist of the liberal tradition and quite naturally he found himself in a major disagreement with the 'mainstream' view of the development planning."



Clint Eastwood: A Biography. By Richard Schickel (Jonathan Cape, distributed by Rupa; £12 50). "...in a time when public figures are forever trying to ingratiate themselves with us", Richard Schickel writes in the Prologue, "you can see something exemplary in (Clint Eastwood's) on-screen refusal to be easily liked, and in his off-screen refusal to be easily understood."



Victorian Contexts: Literature and the Visual Arts. By Murray Roston (Macmillan; £40). This book seeks to locate "aspects of Victorian literature within the changing contexts of the painting, architecture, and decorative arts of the time, in order, by such comparison, to identify the contemporary impulses to which these media were reacting."

MAGNETIC MOUNTAIN.

By Stephen Kotkin (University of California Press; \$60).

CLASS STRUGGLES IN THE USSR. 1930-41. PART II. THE DOMINATORS.

By Charles Bettelheim (T.R. Publications; Rs. 190).

RUSSIA UNDER HIGH STALINISM.

By N. Romanovsky and Zafar Imam (Har-Anand Publications; Rs 250).

In the past decade, despite the prevalence of anti-Bolshevik polemic, the literature on Stalinism has been marked by major variations. This has been a corollary of persisting uncertainty concerning the "socialist" character of the dispensation established in the USSR in the 1930s and of doubts about the extent to which Stalin's time was responsible for distortions in Soviet developments.

A number of historians have studied Stalin's quest for power, and its culmination in brutality, to indicate how Stalinism imparted a totalitarian character to the Soviet Union. "Revisionist" history, meanwhile, offers a less categorical position, acknowledging the unusual quality of Stalinism but exercising caution in the treatment of personality and excess. Economic historians, deeply aware of the role of the state in production relations, have sought to lay bare the charac-

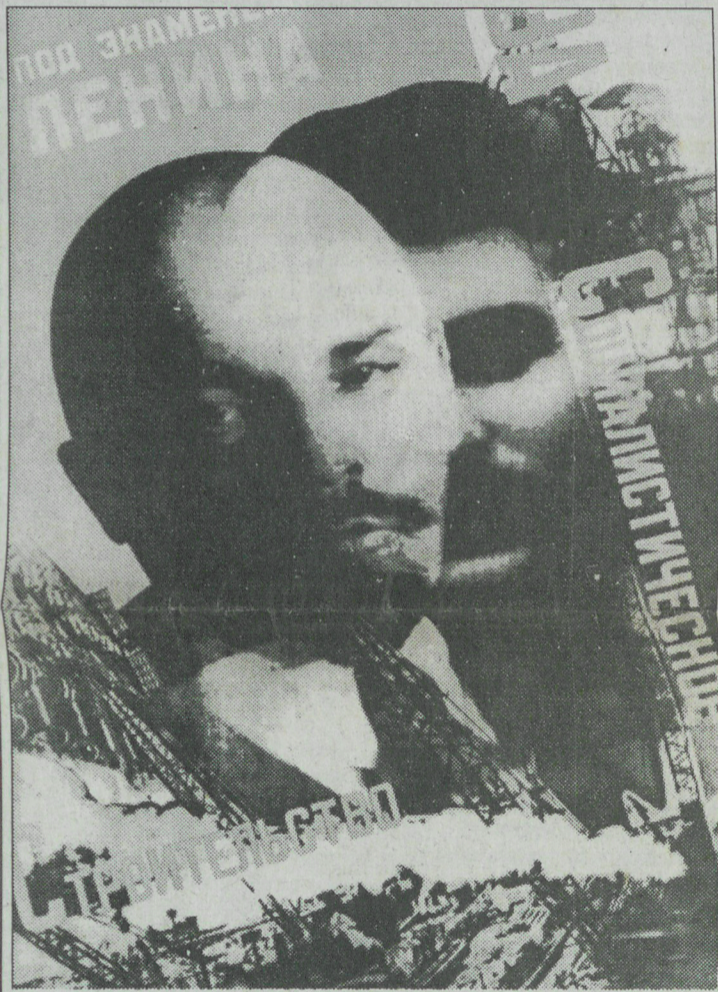
Five-Year Plan in the high flatlands on the Ural river by the side of Magnetic Mountain. He treats it as a microcosm of Soviet life, showing how this pride of socialist living came to be conceived, how the plans for its construction were executed pell-mell and how "the idiosyncrasy of urban life" was the consequence.

The Stalinism which shaped the city was, according to Kotkin, a version of a particular Bolshevik addiction: its inclination towards utopian ideas and principles of modernization dictated by "socialism", "reason" and "science". Magnitogorsk, he argues, formed part of a vast plan of industrialization to enable the USSR to catch up with the West. It was modelled with an eye to the largest steel-producing complex of the time at Gary, Indiana, and the best-known U.S. companies and European architects were consulted on its construction. Despite the rhetoric of achievement, conceptual limitations foreclosed the city's prospects.

The "heroic" "breakneck" construction of the factory complex is reduced to a farce in Kotkin's account. He notes that the location itself could be questioned and that, for all the later myths, the complex got off the ground slowly. Mooted in 1927, it saw real work begin only in 1929. Project managers quickly decided that commissioning of the whole complex during the Plan period was out of the question; instead they set out to pro-



1935 poster by Gustav Klutsis showing Stalin and Voroshilov, then head of the Armed Forces



Another poster by Klutsis

whom the Soviet Union invited in the 1920s to plan the city. By the time May got down to the construction of his "superblock" in 1931, the city had already begun to appear in the strings of barracks and sewage trenches local organizers had built to meet their immediate requirements. May's own "block", an elite dwelling unit, was constructed disregarding his instructions, particularly his insistence that there should be indoor toilets: "In the wintertime, at 40 degrees below (freezing point), people had to climb down from the fourth floor and dash across the street in order to go to the toilet". Personal hygiene was made impossible, public bath having been overcrowded, private baths non-existent and safe drinking water hardly available.

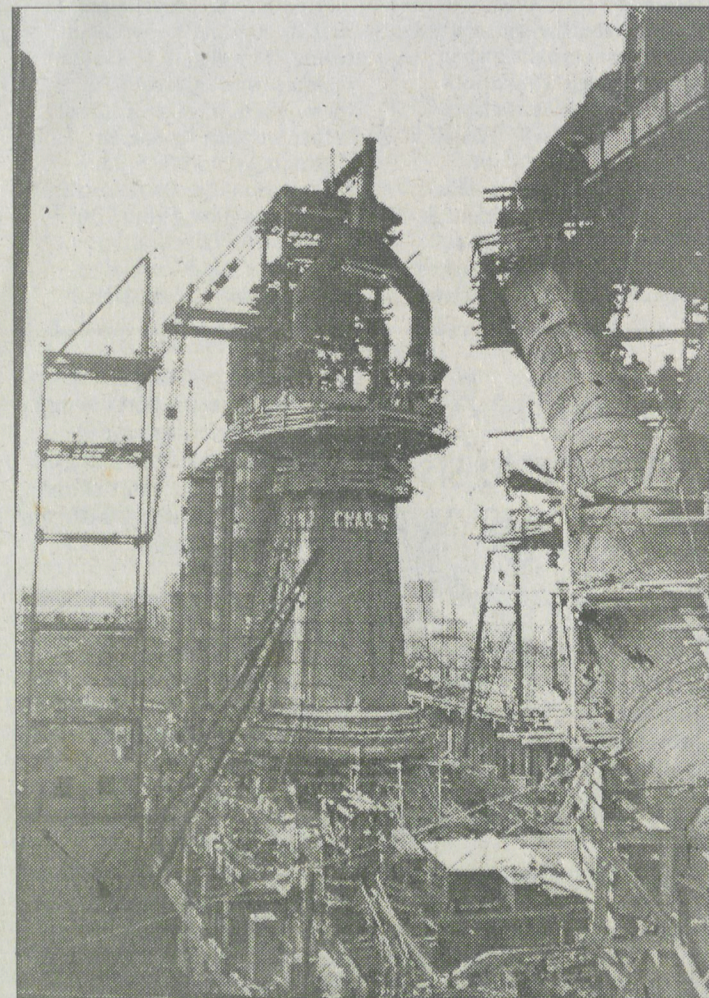
Life in the city degenerated into cards, drinking, abuse and delinquency, defeating the efforts of the Komsomol and Party stalwarts. The various "clubs" for locals lacked heating and other elementary facilities. Poor urban communications and appalling distribution arrangements for essentials (all planned without due consideration of local needs) left little time for recreation and culture. The only hot spots were the Magnit cinema hall, the circus and a small local theatre. No wonder many who came initially were on short contracts and fled at the earliest. The introduction of passports to restrict movements led to a trade in false documents.

The bruited of socialist attainments and the "heroic" depiction of every venture overwhelmed a public ignorance of the reality. The labour achievement awards for Stakhanovites, the "proper" classification and description of workers and the "proper" recording of worker biographies, providing the necessary terms, gave residents of the urban complex their social identity. But, as Kotkin notes, many failed to play their allotted role, just as many of the proletariat ignored the exhortations of the Party faithful to lay off rearing goats and cows.

Nor was such spontaneous activ-



Margaret Bourke-White's photographs of a worker at Magnitogorsk and part of the factory complex



ity limited to the workers. Kotkin shows how resistance manifested itself among the Party *apparatchiki* in the early months of the purges. This occurred during the local fall-out of the "discovery" of the "conspiracy" behind the murder of S. M. Kirov in December 1934/January 1935 in Moscow and Leningrad.

"Reason" was crucial here. The association of the "opponentist" Beso Lominadze with Magnitogorsk "logically" led to a search for his associates in the city and the "unmasking" of a "Trotskyite-Zinovievite Centre" in 1936. This gained substance from the results, still fresh in local memory, of the intense programme of examination of the local Party during 1934-35, which had exposed many of the peccadilloes of excellent comrades. There were major differences among levels of the Party bureaucracy over the implication of their own *nomenklatura* among the names of culprits. Kotkin documents cases of conflict between the regional soviet and the city soviet.

Thereafter Kotkin outlines the socio-cultural mechanism of the local purges following the trial in Moscow of the "Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Centre"; in January 1937 and Stalin's encouragement during February 1937 to go after spies. Egged on by Moscow's demand for self-criticism, local Party members revelled in denunciation and counter-denunciation, which were approached in the spirit of the Party self-examinations of 1934-35 when "culprits" were let off with a reprimand. The reports of what followed do not mention conspiracy and sabotage. Arrests and executions gathered momentum in the course of 1937.

Kotkin traces the "logic" which made each representation of treachery plausible. He carefully links Nazi ascendancy, industrial accidents and official reports of localized crimes. His dense analysis of meetings at Magnitogorsk in March 1937, when Moscow's documents on conspiracy were taken up, reveals the range of misdemeanours submitted for consideration of the NKVD. By placing the denunciations and confessions of 1936-39 in the context of the purges of 1933-35, Kotkin also indicates how false confessions might have been generated in the initial phase of the purges.

Regrettably, Kotkin does not explore the political processes through which Stalinism used the social movements at the height of early Bolshevism both to make sense of the "idioty of urban life" and to provide the framework of the purges. It was this manoeuvre which laid the foundations of the politics and the interplay of classes in the Stalin era. This interaction has, in recent times, prevented identification of "the enemy" in what occurred. Under *perestroika* this aspect of Stalinism made its public exorcism exponentially divisive.

As an exploration of these issues, the final volume of Charles Bettelheim's book is valuable in spite of its limited source-base. After discussing the character of the ideology under early Bolshevism, Bettelheim turns to the generation of "Party capitalism" and a "Party bourgeoisie" in the USSR. Then, as in the work of Rabinovitch and others, Bettelheim focusses on the XVII Party Congress, arguing that Kirov and Sergo Ordzhonikidze sought to establish a degree of security for sections of the CPSU and the civil population. This followed directly from the establishment of privileged professional cadres with-

in the Party after the intensification of the industrial recovery, and also from the unease over the brutal collectivization by the security organs during 1929-32. The dictatorial nature of Party "domination" within a capitalist form came to be established after Kirov's assassination which triggered the purges, the shrinking of the Party membership during 1935-38, and the rapid expansion of the Party thereafter.

Bettelheim contends that, in the conditions of the 1930s, "the predominance of the state form of ownership of capital made it possible for political leaders to play essentially the role of agents of capital as ownership whereas managers were the agents of capital as function" (page 176). The nature of Stalinist authority, as it was asserted in the late 1930s, added a particular quality to this situation: "the contradictions within the 'Soviet bourgeoisie' did not only contribute to the leading group and its apparatus playing an essential role, it contributed also to investing its leadership with an authority which enabled it to impose decisions on various layers of the dominating class as much as upon the dominated class" (page 176).

In such circumstances markers of privilege were extended at the level of wage differentials, decorations and prerogatives. The intelligentsia dominated Party cadres, with the recruitment of members from this section rising from 1.7 per cent of the general intake in 1929 to 43.8 per cent during November 1936-March 1939. This section was gradually subordinated to the central core of the party around the Leader (*Vozhda*), and directives after 1939 sought to reinforce that arrangement. Bettelheim emphasizes that things changed only during the Khrushchev years, although the old structure was discernible even then.

The political system and the apparatus of the party became crucial to the working of Stalinism. Bettelheim takes note of the dissonances within the Party and of the establishment of the *nomenklatura* for advancement in the Party and the Government. The shortcomings of his volume are made good partly by N. Romanovsky and Zafar Imam. Their book, drawing heavily on the Central Party Archive and Romanovsky's personal experience as a senior Party academic, documents the operations of the Party during "high Stalinism" (from 1945 till Stalin's death). Appallingly edited and full of grammatical and printing errors, it is nevertheless an important source of information.

The majority of the chapters are of superficial interest, merely collecting stray details from the archive, with little follow-up. This is especially true of the authors' treatment of the appalling state of the USSR in the years immediately after World War II, and of references to racketeering among Party functionaries. Romanovsky and Imam do not show the scale of these problems nor the response they generated in the Politburo.

The sections on the Party/state and local politics, on the other hand, present a picture only those acquainted with the inner life of the CPSU can draw. Not only do the authors bring out the close intimacy between the Party and the state, but they evoke the tension within that relationship. Romanovsky and Imam record the repeated injunctions from the Central Committee to all levels of the Party during 1945-53, to maintain a distance from straightforward "economic" or "administrative" work, even as Party functionaries were indicted for their failures on this count and the technical side of the Party's apparatus was reinforced.

These accounts are placed alongside the authors' descriptions of the immense leverage of Party officials over Soviet officials and, in turn, the repeated assertion of Party and Soviet authority against the security services. Romanovsky and Imam underline the nature of Russian domination of the *nomenklatura* despite the official policy of encouraging autochthonous preponderance in "national" units. Taken together, these sections present an excellent picture of opportunity structures within the CPSU and the terms on which these had to be negotiated. They also set off Kotkin's neglect of the political processes which constituted Stalin's system.

The nature of the grip of Stalinism on Soviet society must be sought ultimately in the involvement of "free riders" who gained power through an untoward application of the Bolshevik rationale. If the terms of Bolshevism provided the linguistic space and vision within which Stalinism could evolve, only in the Party could they determine structures of the phenomenon. Stalin's time had an undeniable political specificity. Its shadow had a bearing on the Soviet past which did not extend indefinitely beyond the Leader's lifetime.