



A PASTE made of the internal organs of a rat is applied to the back of a guinea-pig. A plague abscess appears if the rodent had been infected.

Where Lurks The Black Death

THE FIGHT AGAINST BUBONIC PLAGUE

A SMALL, brown, furry animal, too common in India to attract much notice, has suddenly become the central figure in a research project with international ramifications. This doubtful distinction has come to the beady-eyed, wild rodent known to zoo-

logists as *Tatera indica*. Recent research tends to show that it plays a vital role in the spread and perpetuation of a dread disease—bubonic plague, the "Black Death".

Evidence linking this seemingly harmless rodent with plague has been collected by scientists working in the rural

areas of Uttar Pradesh. The research is being carried out by the Pasteur Institute, of Teheran, on behalf of the World Health Organisation and in conjunction with the U.P. State Government, the Government of India and the Indian Council of Medical Research.

Uttar Pradesh has known the ravages of plague for centuries.

The disease flares up at more or less regular intervals, killing in thousands. More than 50,000 people died in a single epidemic in 1947. Some explanation is now available why plague control in India has remained an unequal fight for the health authorities: the control strategy was based on premises not wholly correct.

GROUNDNUT HUSKS discovered while digging are often a sure clue to the presence of rodents in an area. It is possible to find fleas in the soil here and a routine check is carried out. Right: The "agent" of the Black Death.

