

# frontier

Vol. 1: No. 30

NOVEMBER 2, 1968

PRICE 35 PAISE

## On Other Pages

COMMENTS	2
VIEW FROM DELHI	
SOVIET ARMS AGAIN	
FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT	4
SEVEN DAYS OF A FLOOD	
NITYAPRIYA GHOSE	6
CALCUTTA DIARY	
GYAN KAPUR	10
MARXISM AND PARLIAMENTARISM III	
ABDUL GAFAR	11
THE PRESS	
FISHING FOR A CROWN?	15
NEW CZECH FILMS	
PROBODH KUMAR MAITRA	17
LETTERS	18

Editor : Samar Sen

PRINTED AT MODERN INDIA PRESS,  
7, RAJA SUBODH MULLICK SQUARE,  
CALCUTTA-13 AND PUBLISHED WEEKLY  
BY SAMAR SEN FROM 61, MOTT LANE,  
CALCUTTA-13

## WAITING FOR GODOT

THE descent of VIPs on North Bengal continues. For a week the people were left to stew not in their own juice but of the Government which has failed in two decades to adopt an effective flood-control measure in an area where flood is endemic. The Governor, Mr Dharma Vira, who was in Darjeeling at the time of disaster, did not think it necessary to come down. It was only after the people, in Jalpaiguri town and elsewhere, had restored the shambles to some shape that the sight-seeing trips of VIPs began. Mr Morarji Desai, fresh from his annual pilgrimage to the USA, was the first VIP to do North Bengal. He could not do Jalpaiguri, though; for the people there, believing in their innocence that the Gandhian Deputy Prime Minister had really come to share their suffering, wanted him to walk them through the silt-covered town. When the bluff was called Mr Desai had to scamper back to safety, leaving it to others to sort out whether Jalpaiguri was visited or unvisited. Since then official sight-seers and free-trippers have been pouring into the area in an endless stream. If this flow of personages was matched by an equally steady flow of relief, the suffering of the stricken would have somewhat mitigated. Even the rickety relief that the Government has been able to organise in three weeks is being constantly upset by the visits. The money that is being spent on air-travels and helicopter-rides, on lunches and dinners could feed thousands for days; but the Government seems to think that the hungry would rather miss meals than "darshans" of the leaders.

A calamity of such magnitude deserved an aerial survey by the Prime Minister. This had to be delayed for she was busy spreading India's message among Latin American dictators at the time. She could not leave New Delhi immediately on return as urgent matters were awaiting her decision. When she was finally able to make it, the first shock was over, and the calamity had become, as every major issue now does, an occasion for another bout of factional feud in the Congress. Not all Congressmen were sad to learn that Mr Desai was chased out of the town of Jalpaiguri; those who were must have been hoping all these days that the reception the Prime Minister would get in the town would not be very different. But the battle of Jalpaiguri has been undecided, both sides having some points to their credit. Mr Desai had to flee the town for what he perhaps thought was his life

but there was no police lathi-charge, though a few might have been run over by his speeding car had they not jumped into the roadside quagmire. Mrs Gandhi was not heckled that way ; but there was a police lathi-charge on demonstrators, and the Prime Minister had to leave abruptly. The great debate after the Prime Minister's visit centred not on how relief was to be reached to remote villages or the quantum of it, but whether the demonstration was hostile to the Prime Minister ; as if a demonstration hostile to the Government could, at the same time, be a hallelujah for the Prime Minister, who heads that Government.

Curiously, the political identity of the alleged stone-throwers, whose activities were said to have forced the police to resort to a lathi-charge in the interest of the Prime Minister's security, has not been established. It has been officially said that they did not belong to any of the UF parties ; nor did they belong to that convenient scapegoat of all occasions, the Naxalites. This leaves out only the Congress. Can it be that the agents-provocateurs at Jalpaiguri, if there were any, belonged to the Congress ? Mr Desai is not without friends in this State, and, significantly, Mr Atulya Ghosh fell too ill to be in North Bengal during the Prime Minister's visit. Mrs Gandhi has appealed that politics should be kept out of relief. She can make a good beginning by disciplining her own party, or if that is beyond her, at least her own group in the party. The possibility of either is remote. Official relief is already being channelled through the Congress, and demands for all-party relief committees are encountering cold response. With some money to throw about, the regional bosses of the party would be failing in their duty if they do not try to consolidate the positions of their leaders. The misfortune of the people of North Bengal has come handy to the quarelling mandarins of the Congress party, and the problem of relief and rehabilitation has been relegated to the background. Despite all glib assurances, a firm promise of not more than Re 1 crore has so far been made by the Centre for relief to five million people

reported to have been affected by the calamity. This means a princely amount of Rs 2 per head ; another rupee or

two will not make much of a difference to those who have lost their all. North Bengal is waiting for relief in vain.

## Hunger And Education

The higher-ups of those who have chosen education as their means of livelihood are second only to ministers, members of parliament and government officers so far as the fringe benefit of going abroad is concerned. What they learn from such trips is obscure, quite naturally, because after all education is so very an abstract thing. One does not question their motives even though the results are not commensurate with the money spent or the euphoria generated. But there are occasions when one cannot help feeling a bit surprised, that is, when in this seminar or that these educationists open their educated traps.

One such seminar was recently held in New Delhi. Styled a national seminar, it was convened by the Union Ministry of Education and the National Council of Educational Research and Training. The subject for discussion was what the educationists considered the burning question of the day—wastage and stagnation of education at the primary school level.

It can be reasoned on behalf of the educationists attending the seminar that they had no hand in writing the directive principles of the Constitution and, therefore, should not be bothered why free primary education is not yet available to all the children and adults of the land, why after 21 years of a single-party dedicated governance the percentage of literacy today is 28.6 or why the country has spewed up five hundred and sixty million additional illiterates during the last fifteen years. The seminarists were concerned with the quality and not the extent of education. In a way they must be considered wise ; they know that the meagre resources of the country must go down the defence drain and so they are not concerned if more people are getting literate or not.

What did they have to say about improving the quality of primary education ? To start with, they have recommended (a) that the best teacher of a primary school should be given the charge of Class I because the youngest children require the finest teacher and (b) that children over 11 years should not be admitted to Class I which is meant for the age-group 5-7, presumably because of the wide I.Q. disparity.

This rare insight into child psychology and fervent desire to improve the primary education structure notwithstanding, the seminarists appear to have lost sight of one single vitiating factor that prevails in the country—more than half of our newly created primary schools are single-teacher schools.

It becomes obvious, when these enlightened educationists talk of primary education, that they have in mind their own children, clad in imported rompers, slack-line frocks and woollen leggings, playing with teddy bears and nylon-hair dolls. How else could they recommend improved play-way methods, with ultra-modern educational gadgets, to naked children who come to school, when they come at all, with only snot in their nostrils ? The educationists must have the standard of education elevated, even though teachers continue to be on a pay scale of Rs. 70-120 per month and that too paid in irregular instalments. It is no bother to them that teachers who teach in primary schools are mostly drawn from the band which gets through school final grades by sheer grace (marks) of the school boards. The seminarists must have the primary school campus beautified. They have even recommended residential quarters for teachers in a country where school buildings are a thatched wonder—the mildest rain

Father went on asking for details till my wife burst out, "Dad, will you please stop it?"

### The Fifth Day

The morning began with an uncomfortable taste. The Mother served toasts with pepper and they were delicious. But as I pondered it struck me that it was no pepper but mud and I wondered if alluvial soil was antiseptic within one's bowels too.

Babu and I went to look for a doctor, we had got to have ourselves inoculated.

Near Kadamtala we saw Sibudu and his buddies lazily conversing. A fellow was pleading for a car and Sibudu was assuring him of help. But the trouble was that the fellow wanted a promise and Sibudu wouldn't make it.

"How can I give you a promise at times like these? If they come again, I'll kick them out and put your pregnant wife inside," he quietly said.

"Not my wife, my sister."

"How does it matter? Go home. Let me see if they come again."

Who were these 'they'? I pieced together bits of their conversation and got the answer. It appeared that some people had been coming from Siliguri in shining Ambassadors and Standard Heralds with pretty-pretty wives. They were very excited, couldn't miss the biggest flood of Asia, living so near. But Sibudu felt insulted by this spree of flood-seeing. He had opened the doors of the cars, whenever he found them coming, pulled the riders out, kicked them on their soft behinds, put some evacuees inside and ordered the drivers to carry them to Siliguri relief camps. Since then Sibudu had no peace, he was constantly pestered by people to help them send their pregnant wives, ailing babies and invalid fathers to Siliguri. Sibudu was patient to start with and obliged when he could. But he couldn't possibly construct cars, could he? Besides, he had other things to take care of. For example, he had yet to find that hell of a D.C. and teach him the lesson of his life.

The flood-seers themselves had worked up some nuisance. They had their behinds kicked and so complain-

ed against the breakdown of law and order. The D.C., it was rumoured, had requested the Siliguri S.D.O. to prevent people of Siliguri from coming to Jalpaiguri. In the process, the Siliguri relief operators too were held back. Moreover, it was heard, the D.C. had alleged that relief people were not distributing their help equitably and there was rank injustice. Peace was threatened on this score too. The unofficial relief operators were requested to deposit their materials at the court, so that government officials could make an equitable distribution.

How wise! The result of the official intervention was the choking of whatever meagre relief was trickling to thousands of starving people. Jalpaiguri minus the sound of cars and relief operators slunk back into its earlier dreariness and desolation.

### Mounting Anger

Anger was mounting. The big merchants asked for police help and now Dinbazar was well guarded. There were no police when small shops had been divested of their merchandise. No medicine whatever in the town. All medicines mixed up and mingled with drainwater. It was reported that Chanchal Piyari, the darling elephant of the town, who had rescued floating men and women by coiling them in her trunk, had died of poisoned water. All the doctors were taking care of their own slimy houses, they had no time to look after patients. Mr Dharma Vira had no time to come to see Jalpaiguri, he was too busy protecting seasoners in Darjeeling. The hospital, or whatever remained of it was on the other side of the river which had lost all the four connecting bridges. The army people were waiting near the A. C. College for the green signal but Writers' Building wouldn't hear of handing over authority to the army. The army chaps cursed the bloody dhotiwallahs and went on playing cards, having nothing else to do. Fifty-two patients, with fractured legs or arms, tied to their beds on the ground floor of the hospital, had been buried under the silt but the authorities said they had all fled. Fifty prisoners were

choked in a cell, sort of enacting the proverbial black hole tragedy, but the official version was, they had fled too.

The D.C. was in for something, I could see it coming. It didn't matter what he did or did not. It was rumoured that he had been sleeping on the danger signal which he had got as far as three days back. He didn't want people to become unnecessarily panicky. Because of this humanity, thousands had perished, nobody knew for certain how many. Those who survived were starving because he would not hand over his authority. Somebody argued in his favour that even if he had issued the warning, nobody would have heeded it. Might be. Educated townfolk wouldn't have, probably. But what about the thousands of refugees, living on the char, who were the first to be engulfed? Did anybody make certain that the embankment was strong enough, after the alarm-raising heavy rains, the fiercest in the century, at Kalimpong and Darjeeling?

Sibudu and his mates seethed in anger when they heard the strange order of road blockade. To make matters worse, one of his younger devotees ran towards him panting.

"What are you doing here, Sibudu? The D.C. is threatening to shoot us."

"What?" Sibudu went rigid, "what's up?"

"A Marwari had let his shop open and told everybody to take away the saris and dhotis. They were useless for sale, he said, and moreover people were suffering from cold. But the D.C. says that he won't allow it. It'll raise law and order problems, he says. We protested and he says he'll shoot us."

Springing up like a bullet, Sibudu howled and ran towards Dinbazar, followed hotly by his buddies.

We made an about-turn and went on in search of a doctor. We noticed a few blokes having syringes in their hands but they said they were private. We didn't lose patience. All these days we had been taking enteroquinol tablets twice a day, no matter how our stomachs behaved, because somebody told us in a very medical tone

## Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

that they would hold the bacilli in check. But we craved for a firmer guarantee. At last a doctor was spotted. We queued up. Two long hours under a scorching sun. Babu tried several times to slip out but I had him well under control. A woman, with a baby in her arms, was going back without taking the inoculation. "Hey, what're you doing? You want to die of cholera?" "Why should I die," she frowned upon me, "don't you see I've taken medicines instead?" She showed me a couple of anacins and happily walked away. Another swarthy chap murmured, "I can't allow myself to lie in fever now. I have so much silt to clear. Doctor-babu, give me a medicine and no injection." The doctor without moving a muscle in his face gave him several pills. He walked off, wondering why we should stand in queue. For the pleasure of having a needle pierce our arms when simple tablets were available?

The rest of the day passed in loading trucks with carcasses. A number of requisitioned trucks, the first positive sign that the administrative machinery existed somewhere, were made available with drivers, but no scavengers. Enterprising people were taking the trucks down to their own areas. Fortunately our area was one such. We raised funds so that we could buy rum, for the boys who agreed to join the loading operation. A defeated municipal commissioner alone contributed three hundred bucks and so our area was the first

in the town to be cleared. All the same, we had to join, the operation which required many hands. All the day we toiled, our body feverish because of the inoculation or the operation, we didn't know which. The carcasses were giving out the foul stench, so we made our dirty handkerchiefs dirtier by pouring dettol on them, and used them as masks. Blood dribbled out of the dead cows, even four days after death. Crows and dogs had eaten into many of them. While we dragged the carcasses, the dogs snarled and prowled around us, being denied their food. There were at least fifty carcasses and one truck could take care of only eight to ten. Every time the truck would leave, we wondered if it would come back after depositing them near the Teesta, and kept our stinking fingers crossed. The operation dragged on. We took our meals in between, the aroma of khichuri getting mixed with the stench of dead cows. We gave up towards the evening, but the boys went on with the operations. By three in the morning the last truckload whined away.

Greatly relieved, we retired to our respective dining tables, chairs or floor. What a bliss. Securely inoculated, no carcasses around, the Mother promising toasts with condensed milk as breakfast—what more pleasure could I get on this planet? But something was bothering the Father. After the last truck had rattled off, he suddenly leapt up. What if there was another carcass near the house? The unmistakable stench was there. The Mother said, no, it was the smell of rotting wheat but the Father wouldn't agree. He made us all leave the room and we searched with the help of a couple of lanterns for the hidden carcass. It would be a real bother if there were a carcass left out for there would be no more truck available. After a laborious search, we traced the smell to its origin. What a pleasant surprise. It was no cow, only a dog rotting under cover of a cluster of water hyacinths. We came back happy. The stench was there, but it was a mere dog's.

(To be concluded)

INTELLECTUALS as a class, so prolific in ideas, have not much of a problem themselves so far as the population explosion is concerned. All over the world they tend to be more and more sterile in their power to procreate. But to deny that family planning in India is necessary is to shut one's eyes to reality. To attack family planning as such, as was done recently by one of the Left leaders, simply because it is wasteful, leads us nowhere. If the Government cannot effectively carry out its plans in one sphere, it is not likely to do so in others. But that does not take away the necessity of doing something to keep in check the mounting population pressure. If we do not do something about it consciously, whether we like it or not, old man Malthus is there to take care of it.

It does seem that the Government, after passing through the transistor and helicopter phase, is coming down to brass tacks. The present campaign to popularize family planning by selling contraceptives at less than a sixth the normal price is certainly a step in the right direction. How puritans will like it is another matter. Posters announcing sale of "Nirodh" are there all over Calcutta in grocery and stationery shops even in side streets.

Incidentally, this is a sphere practically shunned by social workers of all parties, what little work is done being left to Government agents whose links with the people are naturally tenuous. We are all rapidly falling into the habit of becoming passive spectators of our own fates and blaming everything on the Government as once we blamed the British. In this connection I cannot resist the temptation of recounting an incident from the pre-independence days. A Congress member of the Central Legislative Assembly was speaking on the Budget and went on drearily recounting one woe after another for which he blamed the British. 'Who is responsible for this, Sir,?' he would ask and then answer

---

### NOTICE

November 5 being a holiday, the next issue of *Frontier* will appear on Friday.

Business Manager.

---

FRONTIER is available from  
SUNIL KUMAR MOHANTA,  
Eastern Book Agency,  
Khadimpur,  
P. O. Balurghat,  
West Dinajpur.

'The British.' Ultimately he recounted the miseries caused by a rapidly rising population and without thought asked the same question, 'Who is responsible for this?' But before he could blame this too on the British, the whole House burst into laughter and alerted the member to what he was saying. But as a nation we are rapidly losing what little sense of humour we ever had.

\* \*

In one sense it remains true for the Indian working class that they have only their chains to lose. But in another sense they have much to lose by joining the middle-class dominated struggles. Their innate sense of morality and fellow feeling and solidarity, for example. There was a time when the educated clerks and the illiterate peons and workers in offices and factories lived in more or less watertight compartments. That of course is changed but I doubt whether it has done the workers any good. All that this fraternization has done may be to instill the vices of the middle classes into the workers. I am inclined to this view from my experience of the chit funds which abound in most offices.

These funds are supposed to be a form of co-operative where by a monthly subscription, usually, Rs. 5, the members have a source of money in case of need. While forming these funds speeches are of course made about the need to stand by the side of one another and how it will help self-reliance. In practice, however, they are run on most cut-throat lines. I happened to be connected with one such fund and in my innocence suggested that out of the interest charges a certain percentage should be kept aside to be used for charitable purposes. On one pretext and another this proposal was shelved, though everyone was kind enough to say that it was a good idea but somehow not workable. For a year or two things

went on with a mere 12% interest being charged for loans. This happens to be the legal maximum. There was a time, not so long ago, when there was a hue and cry all over India to fix a maximum rate of interest to prevent extortion.

To return to the point. It was pretty soon found that other funds were charging higher rates of interest. To be precise, 36% per annum. And why should this one be an exception? Soon things were changed and the rates of interest increased to fall in line with others. What is interesting is that the worker members, if anything, were more vocal in their demand to fleece the needy among their fellows. They seem to have become as rapacious as the hated village money-lender of old and as heartless towards the less fortunate among their own fellows.

\* \*

Unwanted children are liable to have a woebegone look and the Calcutta trams are no exception. Taken over during the UF regime, they seem to have become the present Government's cross to be borne till such time as a representative Government takes over. The Company's management in London, of course, are almost out of the picture and would like to come in only if there are any prospects of compensation. Once the pride of Calcutta, the trams are rapidly deteriorating. In a desperate attempt probably to increase revenues, huge advertisements are appearing on the outside. So far they had been restricted to small panels inside, on the top. With Vividh Bharti of All India Radio going commercial, and advertisements even on the outside of electric trains, there is no reason why we should insist on a blank surface while boarding trams. But why add insult to injury? It is bad enough that inside the seats are now frequently torn and broken and dirt is all over. But at least the advertisers can be asked to put up something a little more pleasing or at least not so revolting as the things hurriedly painted like the election slogans adorning empty spaces on walls.

## Marxism And Parliamentarism—III

### France : Seizure of Power or the Other Path ?

ABDUL GAFAR

WHEN in September 1938 Daladier signed the Munich Pact, the French Popular Front Government had virtually ceased to exist. To hide their own treachery and their collusion with Hitler, the French leaders branded the communists as the enemy of the country and began to spread all kinds of slander about them. Within a year, in September 1939, the Communist Party of France was declared illegal, its dailies *L'Humanite* and *Ce Soir* and 150 other journals were banned and 629 trade unions dissolved. Many communists were thrown into prison while others went underground.

When on June 2, 1940, the Nazis started their offensive against France, they hardly met any resistance. On June 9, the Government fled Paris and on June 17 France capitulated. Meanwhile, on June 13 General Weygand solemnly informed the runaway Cabinet that Thorez (who was then in Moscow) was already installed at the Elysee Palace as the head of a proletarian government in Paris!

With the occupation, all the French political parties ceased to exist except the underground Communist Party. The Socialist Party lacked the required aggressiveness. The Radical Socialists were still more wary. Hardly a month had passed after the German occupation when the communists gave the first call to the French people to organise resistance against the invaders *inside* the country. It was about the same time that General de Gaulle began to rally abroad the first volunteers for a new French army. Del Vayo, who had been the Foreign Minister in the Spanish Popular Front Government and who was well acquainted with the French situation, wrote in his Memoirs about de Gaulle:

Our agent at Vanarasi is  
MANNALAL DAS  
D-35/321A Jangambari

NOVEMBER 2, 1968

"He was surrounded by a few intellectuals, journalists and army officers who had survived Dunkirk. They were a curious mixture; some believed only in force, others only in de Gaulle, the rest only in themselves. None of them was capable of building a unified political movement." (*The Last Optimist*, p. 335).

London's *Daily Telegraph* reported on December 20 that the "only party still existing, though illegally, being that of the communists, over 1,000 of them were arrested last month. They are distributing anti-German tracts with a strong appeal to French patriotic sentiments."

The resistance movement grew slowly but steadily. It consisted of healthy, vigorous youth who at first did not have much political understanding. The communists trained them politically. By the end of 1942 the party was well knit and spread as an organisation throughout the country. The illegal *L'Humanite* began to appear regularly. The first number gave a call to the people of France for armed resistance.

A "Manifesto of the Communist Party of France" was illegally printed and 200,000 copies were distributed. In answer to the general sentiment—"wait, wait, wait till our allies come"—the Manifesto quoted Saint Just: "Circumstances are only difficult for those who fear the grave" and urged the French people to organise themselves into small groups of guerilla bands and partisans. It also asked the party activists to form new party groups of three and new cells comprising a maximum of three groups of three.

Within two years the Francs-Tireurs and partisans (FTP), as the guerilla groups were called, and the Communist Party became formidable organisations in spite of terrible repressive measures by the Gestapo and the puppet Vichy regime. Of course, the party paid the price: several thousands were executed and imprisoned, among them many of its top-ranking leaders like Gabriel Peri, Pierre Semard, Prof. Politzer, Jean Catelas, scientist Jaques Solomon. Thousands

died in battle with the enemy. The best of the resistance suffered the heaviest casualties. Four-fifths of the best qualified for a new leadership were lost in 50 months of struggle.

Before de Gaulle's forces landed in France in August 1944 many militants in the Communist Party urged that this was the most opportune moment to capture power. At this fateful moment the party leadership hesitated and temporised and missed the first chance to seize power.

Then came the Liberation. The Germans were gradually driven out of France. As already mentioned, during the occupation all bourgeois parties had disappeared—a phenomenon by no means restricted to France alone. At the time of the Liberation, it was through the Francs-Tireurs, the working class organised in the CP, CGT, and SP that the political future of France seemed destined to be decided. In 1945, apart from de Gaulle, Maurice Thorez was the most outstanding leader in France, as was Togliatti in Italy. All the other national leaders had gone down during the resistance movement. The French bourgeoisie, which after betraying their country to the Nazis went over to Petain's Vichy regime, were now in complete disgrace. In 1945 there was no bourgeois party in France; the bourgeois State (the Petain regime) had crumbled to pieces.

Towards the end of the German occupation a new party came into existence in France—MRP (Popular Republican Movement). It was essentially a petty-bourgeois Catholic party, a strange conglomeration of all sorts of antagonistic elements of Leftists, Centrists and Rightists. It included many followers of de Gaulle. Many Rightists who had collaborated with the Vichy regime wormed their way into this party.

On the eve of the first post-war elections the MRP in France and the Christian Democratic Party in Italy were boosted by the Vatican. All the years when the barbaric forces of Mussolini and Hitler had been advancing the Pope had remained quiet. Now the reactionary forces were dis-

rupted and Western Europe was at a cross-roads and was about to turn left. Too much was at stake—an absolute majority of the communists and socialists might have ruined reaction's last chance for a come-back. The Pope assumed command of the reactionary forces which some people, including many communist leaders, naively believed had gone down to final defeat on V-E Day.

On Ascension Day, three days before the elections in France, Pope Pious XII, casting all pretensions of neutrality, summoned the faithful to battle against godless communism to save European civilisation. All the reactionary forces gathered courage. Hardly any Catholic and Right voter stayed away from the polls. Catholic priests and nuns turned out in large numbers to vote.

Behind all this was America. It found that its military and financial might was not enough to stop the onward march of progress; it found religion also an effective instrument in the service of imperialism. From that time the alliance of Vatican reaction and American imperialism stands as a very significant political development of the postwar period.

At the time of the Liberation the economic power of the Right was also in a bad shape. Industrial activity was at a standstill; the food situation was acute, high prices and a black market were rampant.

### Two Forces

At this turning point in French history two forces confronted each other: de Gaulle and the communists. This was the key to the events that followed. Two paths were open to the communists at this moment: to capture power immediately before the Rightists were able to organise themselves and establish a People's Democratic Government under the leadership of the proletariat or take to the parliamentary path and get bogged down in puerile and fruitless parliamentary politics which always works in favour of the bourgeoisie and is always an ineffective instrument for the working class.

In 1945 the Communist Party's

and winds blow off the thatch to provide healthy ventilation.

The other recommendations . . . but let us break off. The language they employ itself betrays the vacuity: drop-outs, school campus, school initiation, activity methods, age-cohort. Why children 'drop out' of primary classes and thus cause 'wastage' and 'stagnation', if the seminarists must know, is because they are forced by hunger to join their elders at the tenderest age in the struggle for food. The recommendations of the foreign returned educationists have a reality of their own, the reality of the overfed drawn from Anglo-American school campuses. They have nothing to do with the reality of the underfed that is our country.

## Olympian Heights !

When a nation goes downhill, it goes downhill in all directions. There must be a certain connection between the mental and the physical processes, for a decline in the moral stature brings in its train a corresponding diminution in physical achievements as well. India has returned from the Mexico Olympics with a single medal, that too a bronze one. The last chance to win what would at most have been a mini-glory was puffed out when our team came a cropper in hockey. This debacle has been followed by the usual chorus of mutual recriminations and accusations. Our people have been told, over and over again during the last twenty-one years, that by definition we can do no wrong; if nonetheless some disappointment overtakes us—if we lose a war or a game—, this must be on account of conspiracy or treachery on the part of a, b or c, foul play on the part of adversaries, bad judgment on the part of referees, the wrong size or shape of this or that accessory. The fault never belongs to us, it belongs to others, always.

In the economic sphere we fix the responsibility for our lags and failures on unfavourable weather, the rudeness of foreigners in denying us

adequate aid, cussedness on the part of our neighbours; similarly even in commonplace affairs like sport, we try to explain away our incompetence by referring to special circumstances. The reluctance to make even elementary efforts to raise our efficiency stems from the same attitude of mind. We are the best of earth—haven't we an ancient civilization and culture, therefore there can be no question of our trying to improve ourselves. It is a closed universe. The leaders keep on haranguing a gullible population about how other nations are vying with each other to emulate our character, valour, beauty, wisdom, prowess. A minor success is accordingly magnified out of all proportions, a defeat is tacked away in the closet. If it were not so contemptible, our rustic faith in our invincibility would have evoked a response of amused tolerance. No doubt such innocence wears well on little islands like, for example, Jamaica or Trinidad. On the other hand, when a nation, which till yesterday had the pretension to claim the leadership of the entire underdeveloped world, tends to break out into hysterics over a

Khorana—who in any event does not any more belong to it—or over a defeat in hockey, it is no longer cute, but downright nauseating. Self-reliance—economic as well political—is an excellent target to work for, but the first step in self-reliance is hard work, perseverance and a determination to first achieve results before showing off one's non-existent wares. In our case, self-assertion precedes self-reliance, and releases a gush of vulgarity perhaps unmatched in human history.

Maybe the rot has already proceeded very far. Maybe the best possible thing that could now happen to this nation would be some form of comprehensive incendiary. In case such a culmination is yet to be avoided, the lesson that should be driven home is that of humility. This nation must first learn to be humble and applaud merit in others before it can really generate efficiency in any sphere of activity. There is a link between our inability to improve our balance of payments and our losing the hockey title in the Olympics: and the cure is common.

## “Rethinking” On Alliances

*A correspondent writes:*

With the U.S. imperialism beaten to shreds and trying frantically to negotiate out of the mess in Vietnam, its minions in Asia have begun to discover quite a number of truths. One such precious thing was revealed last month by the Thai Foreign Minister, Thanat Khoman. Speaking at the Foreign Correspondents' Club in Bangkok, he confided that “military alliances are obsolete”. Understandably, however, he maintained golden silence about bilateral military pacts such as existed between Bangkok and Washington. Reportedly Malaysian leaders also have fallen in love with the concept of neutrality and non-alignment. The realization that ‘neutrality’ guaranteed by the two super-Powers is the sanest path has finally dawned upon them. Thanks to Russo-American *druzba* this dual satellitism

called ‘non-alignment’ has become respectable and as such is a very useful signboard for the puppets of imperialism. With world public opinion arrayed overwhelmingly against U.S. imperialism few would now want to be openly identified with it. At this moment the policy of ‘non-alignment’ with the blessings of Moscow and Washington comes in very handy.

All the fine words about the virtues of non-alignment and futility of military alliances represent only one side. But the wall, we know, has two sides. The other side shows puppet regimes ganging up against the people of their own countries. That is why Tun Razak, the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, fresh from an exhilarating trip to Moscow, flew to Bangkok late last month to hold talks about joint Thai-Malaysian anti-guerrilla operations. Though the re-

sult of the talks was not immediately known, that they hatched some new plots to repress jointly the patriotic and progressive forces of both countries was quite obvious. Already taking cue from their great teacher LBJ they have engaged in 'hot pursuit' of guerillas across each other's borders. Another measure—mass resettlement of population—seems straight out of the book of General Templer. The Muslims in the southernmost provinces of Thailand are accused of being sympathetic to the guerillas of the Patriotic Front for no simpler reason than the fact that Thailand is a Buddhist State. Moreover, Muslims support the guerillas because, as the Thai Deputy Defence Minister explains, two of the associates of the guerilla hero Chin Peng are Muslims! Hence the programme of resettling in the south 15,000 families of proven loyalty to the constitution and Buddhist abhorrence of violence. They are expected to provide the water in which the Thai anti-guerilla fish could swim. But everybody is not sure whether the screening of the new settlers has been foolproof.

On the Malaysian side the Chinese have been fixed as the villain allegedly constituting the main bulk of the Malayan National Liberation Army—a shrewd device to sow dissension between the Malayan Muslims and the Chinese population. This game of communalism to divide and repress the people might in the end produce a Frankenstein's monster in South-East Asia which is a melting pot of races and religions. The Muslim people of Malaysia might tolerate the anti-Muslim policies of Thailand no more than the overwhelmingly Chinese population of Singapore could stand the anti-Chinese attitude of Malaysia. The only guarantee against this nasty development is the militant unity of the people fighting for national liberation and democracy in Thailand and Malaysia.

---

For FRONTIER contact  
EASTERN BOOK AGENCY  
Khadimpur, P.O. Balurghat,  
West Dinajpur

*View from Delhi*

## Soviet Arms Again

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

PERHAPS the cynic was right. If we are bad in everything else, how could we be good in hockey? And if we had been knocked out by Pakistan—and not Australia, there might have been communal riots in the cow country over here even as the decision for observing the National Integration Year was being processed.

There is no change in New Delhi's attitude to anything because it is the same obnoxious idiom that manifests itself in cliché thinking. How often have we heard the Prime Minister tell the nation that our policies are always under constant review? When the Soviet arms sale to Pakistan became known, Mrs Gandhi spoke about the rigidity that had beset our policy towards our neighbours, especially with the consequent loss of manoeuvrability towards the Big Powers. For some time, even the hard-boiled cynics among us were taken in by the talk of some kind of a dialogue with China. But the same kind of scare stories about an armed build-up were being circulated from sources which are not hard to trace. But last week there seemed to have been a sudden realisation that the presence of Chinese diplomats at the Khatmandu airport when President Zakir Husain flew in there might mean something. Reports have it that the Indian Mission in Peking has been asked to report whether China was in a mood to exchange an ambassador with India. In the first place, who withdrew the ambassador first?

Since July, there has been no conscious effort to retrieve any manoeuvrability for our foreign policy. When the Czechoslovak tragedy came, Indo-Soviet relations ought to have come under a strain. But this did not happen because the Government equivocated, all in return for the doubtful benefit of a Soviet veto in the event of a UN debate on Kashmir.

The Soviet veto on Kashmir is by no means certain even at this distance of time. Came the Firyubin mission to New Delhi and Prof D. R. Gadgil's mission to Moscow. The results are not exciting to either side.

But the despatch of the Swaran Singh mission to Moscow last week indicates an unedifying anxiety to play the Soviet game. The composition of the team is significant. It includes, besides other civilian and military officials, the deputy chiefs of the three wings of the defence forces—army, air force and the navy. The objective is too obvious. If India has regained any manoeuvrability for her policy, the total dependence on the Soviet Union for arms aid would not have been so obvious. In addition to fresh commitments on military hardware, the Swaran Singh team is to seek a rescheduling of the MIG project, spares and accessories for equipment already delivered and speeding up of supplies already committed.

The report about U.S. willingness to help Pakistan secure tanks is credible because it is well known that both the U.S. and the Soviet Union are keen on maintaining "parity" and "balance" of arms between India and Pakistan. Which is exactly what Dulles tried to do during the "let Asians fight Asians" phase in the fifties. The United States is convinced that India has been building up a powerful arsenal of Soviet hardware and the balance has been upset despite the recent Soviet decision to sell Pakistan a limited quantity of arms.

The reported U.S. attitude to tanks for Pakistan and the impending Pakistani attempt for new Chinese arms give the Swaran Singh mission enough leverage with Moscow in the bid for more Soviet arms. Thus the arms race has not only started but is gaining momentum.

Far from securing any manoeuvrability, the foreign policy planners have been leading the country to greater dependence on one of the two super-Powers and yet the pretence is meant to be kept up. It is not yet known how the payments for Soviet military supplies are being made in rupees against the trade account or in some other currency like sterling? When the DIR was in operation, all these were guarded secrets and publication of anything connected with this was regarded "prejudicial" and actionable. But the DIR has become so much a part of our thinking mechanism that no MP or journalist ever thinks of asking the Government about it. The Soviet Union has so much obsolete hardware to dump on Asian countries just as there is so much NATO surplus for sale. The Patton tanks are becoming obsolete for NATO but are good enough for Pakistan, like the Mirage fighter aircraft which are being replaced by the Phantoms.

#### Kerala Bandh

Nearer home, the one-day anti-Centre bandh in Kerala was something of a farce. It was farcical because Mr Namboodiripad took the trouble of explaining to us here that the Kerala Government was not a party to the bandh but only the political party sponsoring it, that is the CPI(M) was. So Mr Namboodiripad ceased to be a party member and was only a Chief Minister when Mr A. K. Gopalan and several other CPI(M) leaders were taken into custody on October 23. Well, we have heard the same kind of hairsplitting from the Congress side when the Centre engineered the "liberation struggle" in Kerala against the first EMS Ministry back in 1958. The Centre was behind it but all along maintained that it was a people's movement, a mass upsurge in which the Congress was only one of the many participants.

A new factor in Centre-State relations now is the Central Reserve Police. In the past, the Centre had not thought of using this force for any political end as it is doing now. It was always the army. During the anti-Hindi agitation in Madras State,

CRP units are known to have been moved in but Mr Annadurai did not have the courage to speak out against it. In fact, he parried questions on it in the State Assembly. The Centre seems to have found that it would be more pragmatic to make its presence felt in a State by deploying the CRP instead of moving the army in.

But one does not know what exactly Mr Namboodiripad wants now. If a council under Article 263 of the Constitution is all that he wants or if he wants the States to be consulted in deploying the CRP one fails to understand the logic of many things the Kerala Government has been doing. Many would still remember that in 1958-59 the EMS Ministry, when in trouble, requested the Centre to stage a "flag march" of the army to warn the potential trouble-mongers.

It is obvious that Mr Namboodiripad is under heavy pressure from the Gopalan-led organisational wing of the party. The CPI by dissociating itself from the October 23 agitation has ditched the Marxists but the CPI leadership at the Centre should be worried about the impact of this rupture in Kerala on the mid-term electoral prospects in West Bengal. Or does the CPI think that February is still far away and there is time enough to play politics?

By all accounts, the United Front Ministry in Kerala is a goner and even if the CPI(M) makes food a political issue, there is no hope of salvaging the party's lost prestige. The alliance has now degenerated into a consortium of political adventurers representing various vested interests. If the CPI(M) is reconciled to the perils of a non-ideological coalition, it is a different matter.

The Centre's only consideration now is that the dismissal of the Kerala Ministry for an alleged breakdown in law and order should not confer any advantage on the CPI(M) in a future mid-term election. It is all a matter of political judgment, the timing of the coup, for Mr Chavan. It would have come sooner, but for the postponement of the West Bengal mid-term elections.

October 27, 1968

Most rigid!

Most economical!!

Most versatile!!!

STRUCTO

Slotted angles

THE RIGHT SOLUTION

TO ALL YOUR STRUCTURAL,

STORAGE AND MATERIAL

HANDLING PROBLEMS!

Manufactured by

VINAR LIMITED

2A, Shakespeare Sarani,  
Calcutta-16

For full details, design service, ready delivery and urgent erection jobs, write or phone to regional distributors:—

JARDINE HENDERSON LTD

AGENCY DEPT

4 CLIVE ROW,

CALCUTTA-1.

Phone: 22-4351

# Seven Days Of A Flood—II

NITYAPRIYA GHOSH

**H**AVING a paratta and half a glass of water, I retired to the dining table which I was to share with Babu for the night. I wished I had some more flesh around the hipbones that rattled against the bare wood but immediately fell into sleep. We all slept like logs.

The third morning dawned. By the middle of the day the town came back to life. Hundreds of boys came by truck from Siliguri. They had brought relief but they had no idea that the damage was so extensive, neither did they expect the famished look Jalpaiguri wore. Very apologetically, they distributed fistfuls of chira and cupfuls of water and those more equipped, bread and anacin. So meagre were their resources that they almost fled back, assuring us of more relief the next day. The relief donations were absolutely no help but the sympathetic look was touching.

When I reached our house, the child with horror in her eyes reported that the pussycat had eaten a bird and asked if she was not right in beating her for the naughtiness. I was about to answer her when a lorry stopped in front of us. At least fifty boys were standing on it. They all belonged to a Siliguri club, as was evident from the red banner. They alighted, went from door to door, enquired about the number of inmates and distributed two buns for five persons, four chapattis and a candle. They had brought relief for one thousand people and that was distributed within a matter of fifteen minutes. My wife sauntered towards the truck and asked if they had any sugar. Mahua turned scarlet at this unabashed begging and when my wife came back and said, "Hopeless chaps, they forgot to bring sugar," Mahua very nearly fainted in shame. All of a sudden, a boy stormed into the room, whispered "Don't tell others", deposited at least 500 grams of sugar in the bowl my wife had in her hands and ran back.

We were fortunate that our home was near a crossing of four roads and so could see the goings-on of the relief people. The acquisition of sugar made us somewhat human and some of us even indulged in feeling pity for the folks who lived deep down, ignorant of these relief people. But living near a juncture was not all that unmixed good.

It started with the cows. The previous day there was no hint of carcasses around our locality. We greatly admired the Father's wisdom in sending the carcasses down the current towards Domohani or Mondalpara or some such god-forsaken place. Taking the cue, everybody else had adopted the same strategy. But that day we were shocked to see at least thirty swollen carcasses lying in a heap on the field in front of our house and nine bang opposite our door. The Father's face fell. All his labour was lost. How did the carcasses come there? Evidently people had dragged them there under the cover of night. Some even admitted, "Yes, how else would the truck load them? The trucks wouldn't certainly go from door to door to clear off dead cows?" Nice logic but what about poor us? Mahua questioned the Father's sagacity in building a house at the crossing of roads and on top of it leaving yawning open space in front. The Father went out in a huff. He was less tense when he came back after about three hours. "The chairman of the Siliguri Municipality has promised to send a truck and forty sweepers. I hope he is as good as his word."

The carcasses till then were mercifully not giving out any stench, and I found the Father taking the child near the field answering patiently her anxious questions why one cow was looking stiff, the other hung out her tongue and the other had her feet pointing skyward. The Father was even feeling sorry for the milkmen

who had lost their means of livelihood.

My feelings were not however so calm. I had a wild fear that cholera was about to start and none of us had been inoculated. We were using drainwater for cleansing cooking utensils and I was not too sure if the Mother was using tubewell water for cooking.

Grimly I approached the Father and told him that we should at once evacuate. He looked at me startled. He must have seen fear in my eyes. In a dejected voice he said, "All the things are under the mud, they will be useless if we don't take them up and dry. Alright, you take them with you, but I'll stay here."

"But we can't leave unless you do."

"How can I go? The house will be ransacked if it is empty." He turned his face away.

Unable to persuade him, Babu and I went in search of a working tubewell. We had to go as far as Kadamtala where a sight paralysed me. At least two hundred people had got aboard a bus, one heaped upon another and another hundred jostling with one another to get a toe-grip. They were madly leaving the town. As we went towards the A. C. College, we saw endless processions of men, women and children silently trudging towards Siliguri with little or no baggage. Had they lost everything? The thought had never struck me before. "Come on, let's see what's happened to the town," I said to Babu. The experience was unnerving. Not a single kutchra house was in shape. The interiors of the houses were gaping like bared entrails. The boundary walls of pucca houses were lying in neat heaps. Babu said angrily, "Served them right. See how shallow they lay their foundations!"

## Ugly Heap

The town was an ugly heap of muck, fallen thatches, bared tins and unbelievably soiled clothes. "Now I know why nobody built any decent house in Jalpaiguri. Everybody saw the flood coming. Really Babu, have you noticed the humour of it? The

centenary year of the district. Celebrations indeed!"

A man of indeterminable age walking past us said to nobody in particular, "Ma Kali, gazing at the water from the perch of my roof, I wondered if the Teesta, changing her course, had adopted the town as her basin. Ma Kali has saved us."

I turned towards Babu, "Babu, you go home, I will go and see the D.C. or the S.D.O." Babu asked me, surprised, "Do you know them?" "Yes, sort of. I'll try to get hold of a jeep. No point in staying here. We have nothing here except starvation and cholera, have we?" Babu looked at me sadly. I knew that this boy, even after eleven years in an Anglo-Indian school at Kurseong, immensely preferred Jalpaiguri to either Calcutta or Bombay, even though the town had no glamour even in the best of times. "Will the old man agree?" he said gazing at the upturned kiosk which used to sell his *Junior Statesman*. "I'll make him do it," I said with unnecessary vehemence.

But neither the D.C. nor the S.D.O. nor any single officer I knew was available. Either they were dead or had fled from the town. "The administration has collapsed," said one, rather proud of using technical language. One lesser fry grinned when he learnt why I had come: The D.I.G. and officers below him had no jeep. Where would the D.C. find a jeep for us, he wondered.

We stopped dead on our way home. There was a transistor squeaking the news, something about Darjeeling, a heavy landslide or something. But no news about Jalpaiguri. These two days we were so concerned about the muck and getting some food that we never as much as thought of what was happening to the rest of the world. But the blackout on Jalpaiguri stung us rather cruelly. "It is good in a way, Babu. If my parents had heard anything about the flood, they would have been scared stiff. I hope the newspapers too are behaving."

#### The Fourth Day

The fourth day started with the quiet looting of a government ware-

house in our locality. It had about five hundred quintals of rice and wheat. At about eight I saw the first man carrying a sack of rice on his back and hurrying towards his house. Babu and I quickly walked toward the place. Fair or foul, we had to have one. The spectre of the child becoming a skeleton frightened me. After three days' near starvation she had lost much of her vivacity. She had even forgotten how to demand food. It was painful to see her looking with wide eyes at the wild goings-on around her. She was not even responding as on the second day to the Mother's telling her stories of Robinson Crusoe, how he had built up everything out of nothing. The pictures of Biafran children, after three months of starvation, began to haunt me.

The place was a jamboree. Anybody and everybody who had heard the news or happened to pass that way were quietly picking up bagful, sackful, rickshawful and some even handcartful of rice or wheat. No hurry whatever. I looked around for policemen and then remembered that they had either been drowned or fled.

"Is the rice dry?" I asked a man whom Babu knew as a bank clerk. He was panting under a heavy load. He said putting off the load and resting awhile, "How the hell do you expect it to be dry?" "Then why carry it, isn't it useless?" "Look here, gentleman, we've been going without rice for three days. Can you tell me a place in Jalpaiguri where we can buy balam rice? Don't be foolish, take a sack, the rice will stink like hell, but that's about the greatest service you can do to your mother now."

We didn't bring any. For one thing we would not have been able to lift one sack, even between the two of us. For another, wet rice, I remembered the Mother saying, was impossible to eat. Babu was also reluctant. "The stock at the house could see us through seven days."

"Then it is no problem. After seven days, Unicef, Red Cross, Care, Bharat Sevashram will take care of us. We will be kings then."

The Father was taken aback when

he learnt about the warehouse. "That's the end of the rationing. We won't get any rice even if we want to pay for it." After some time, he came back and asked, "Who told you that the warehouse was broken open? It could have been thrown open to make good some funny accounting, couldn't it?"

The whole day the roads in front of us bore the cavalcade of the robbers. Towards the afternoon, some of them were carrying packets of Surf, soap, pencil, paper and even perfume—a co-operative store had been looted too. The Father's ire broke forth, "You louse, what's the big idea? Looting the rice warehouse is one thing—you've got to eat. But what do you do with pencils and soaps? Have you used a soap ever in your cotton-picking life? Shame, looting small shops." One of the young robbers protested, "It's not a shop, it's a co-operative store." "Then the co-operative will wind up because of your foolishness. You won't get things that cheap again."

The Mother inside the house was fuming. She was muttering to herself, "He has gone mad, provoking hooligans for nothing. Does he think they would listen to his grand moral lectures?"

Hardly a moment had passed when the Father entered the room sheepishly and handed over to Mahua a bar of Sunlight soap. "I was chiding a fellow for stealing soaps and he gave me this." "And you accepted?" screamed Mahua. "Yes, I don't know why, I must have been hypnotised." An uneasy silence and then we broke into shrieking laughter.

More relief. That means a few chapattis, a lump of gur and a handful of barley. Then came a truck with a mighty tank on it. We filled all the available containers in the house, buckets, saucepans, teacups, with Siliguri water that looked moderately clean. We all lined up then and had a hearty drink from the tap of the tank. The fellow operating on the tap looked stupefied at our inordinate thirst.

Suddenly I was hailed by somebody. I couldn't recognise the fat youth in

shorts and sneakers but he claimed that he had been my student for some time. I was not too eager to be recognised in that pitiable tunic of mine but there he was, greatly moved by our plight, asking if he could do anything for us. I learnt that he was heading the biggest relief operation in the town at that time. At once I heard myself saying, "Can you get us some food?" The fat Marwari couldn't first believe his ears. He never thought that even we were starving. At once he rose and said, "Yes Sir, I'll get you some." After an hour he came back, all flushed, and said that the stock unfortunately had finished but he would certainly give us some in the evening when he would come back from Siliguri, replenished.

In the evening, he came back with chapattis, puris and nice ghoogni. Happily we talked, recalling the days when at Darjeeling he had been a student. One thought had been however troubling my mind. I couldn't explain the enthusiasm and energy of the Siliguri boys who were going all out to help the flood-stricken of Jalpaiguri. Jalpaiguri and Siliguri were traditional enemies and as far as I knew Jalpaiguri always behaved abominably. Whenever Siliguri boys had come to play at Jalpaiguri, they had been manhandled either by players or spectators. The musical soirees which Siliguri held were often disturbed by Jalpaiguri boys, who had become expert in starting riots. But Siliguri had apparently forgotten all the misdemeanour and had been coming in hordes, on trucks, motorcycles and even on cycles over these twenty-four miles every day. On their way back they were picking up evacuees. And what perplexed me most was the Marwari tribe of Siliguri. I could not imagine why they were so concerned about us. The Marwaris are always generous at times of flood, epidemic or drought, they had a tradition of spending thousands of rupees and all that fart but the physical exertions that these fat pock-marked youths were undergoing were the limit. Or so I thought and cursed my dirty mind. I couldn't resist, however, asking, "Are you distributing in Din-

bazar or everywhere?" My student chuckled, "No Sir, we don't discriminate between Marwaris and Bengalis. Of course there are people who accused us of supplying food in Dinbazar only and tried to snatch our stock. However they were not many. Bad elements exist everywhere, don't they, sir?" Making sure that he was not referring to me, I went on needing about how he procured the relief fund. Was it all voluntary? Yes, it was all spontaneous, no coercion, some donated thousands of rupees, some fifty chapattis. Not satisfied, I went on asking this and that and finally asked, "Are you a member of any political party?" "No Sir, we aren't. We are all members of the RSS." So that was that.

#### Radio News

That afternoon we learnt from the radio that water had receded from Jalpaiguri. That implied that water had flown into it but the radio avoided unnecessary details. Mr Dharna Vira however was much concerned with the plight of six hundred seasoners who had got stuck near Sonada. The army people were making heroic efforts for building up the alternative route through Sankhabari. Great news. Nothing to repair, the four washed-out bridges which used to connect the two parts of the town, thousands of people were marooned on the other side without food and water and shelter. It appeared to me a mystery why the radio was behaving so strangely. To the contrary, I thought, the radio should have exaggerated the miseries, if there was any scope for doing so, if only to induce the Election Commissioner to postpone the elections.

Rahaman, a house painter, came from Paharpur with some news indeed. He was pained to see what had happened to the distemper of our house that he did barely a month ago and said "Still you are all alive. We are all dead." "What do you mean, we are all dead?" "All of us have been washed away except me and one hundred and eleven others." The Father sat up, electrified, "Oh! That never even occurred to me. How

many were you?" "No idea. Forty thousand, if not more. How do we know, we were not counted in the census!" A smile appeared on the lips of the Father but it quickly vanished. "Forty thousand, oh no, that's bullshit. It would be around twenty." He turned towards me—I was listening to Rahaman, unable to grasp what was being talked about—and said, "You know the char? It spreads from the Sevak Road to Mondalpara, about a stretch of 20 miles, I guess. Refugees from Mymensingh took shelter there. They said they were not afraid of water. Real hardworking people. They made the whole of Jalpaiguri depend on them for the vegetables. They made many of us jealous of their affluence. Now they are gone. The whole twenty thousand! What a tragedy."

"Where did the embankment break, do you know?" I asked.

"At Randhramalai and then four other points. Do you know, Sir, they had cracked a long time ago. Hadn't you noticed the heap of boulders when you last went there? They would have taken up the repairs after the Pujas, I guess."

"You didn't get any warning?"

"If only we could get any warning, we could have fled. There were so many goomties but even they had no idea. They ran when water flew over the embankment."

"How did you manage to escape?"

"I was all alone, Sir, as you know. I ran, water behind me. But the others had to take care of their children and women. Besides, they didn't know which side to run. It was dark and water seemed to come from every side. There were some who ran a long way and climbed trees. Now go and see, there are no trees either."

We finished our dinner but the Mother had yet to eat her rice, boiled kachu and a chapatti. She quietly pushed off her plate and prepared to go to sleep. "It's no goddamn business for Rahaman to choose this hour to come and spoil her meal," Babu angrily whispered but did not dare persuade her to eat, after the gruesome story Rahaman had related. The

position in France was most favourable for the seizure of power. It was still the only well-organised party in the country; it had the full control of the CGT with 5,000,000 members, the most powerful militant trade union organisation. It had also organised a considerable section of the peasantry under its leadership and, above all, its ranks were fully armed and well-organised in a powerful army like the Francs-Tireurs and partisans, already seasoned in innumerable battles against a powerful enemy. Moreover, they were in virtual control of a large part of the country.

Of course, there were many difficulties—de Gaulle's army was there and also the allied troops, mainly American; there were also anti-communist and reactionary elements, though they were still unorganised. At that moment de Gaulle's army would not have been a match for the guerilla warfare of the Francs-Tireurs. The Allied troops, already fed up with the prolonged destructive war, were anxiously waiting to go back home and be demobilised as soon as their task of defeating the Nazis was over. How they would have faced a new revolutionary war waged by the entire people for socialism, for a great ideal, was the question. Psychological factors were in favour of the communists.

The Communist Party leadership at this crucial moment did not choose the revolutionary path. It took the parliamentary path instead. What was the result?

At the first parliamentary election in liberated France, held in October 1945, the communists won 26% and the MRP 24%. Communists and socialists together would have had a bare majority in the Assembly, and could have thus formed a government. This the communists proposed to the socialists. Within the Socialist Party the vast majority, specially the rank and file, were in favour of common action with the communists. They also supported the communist proposal for fusion of the "two Marxist parties".

Already in December 1944 a permanent Comité d'Entente had been

set up to consider how to increase co-operation between the two parties with the avowed ultimate aim of complete political unity of the working class. However, some of the top socialist leaders, particularly Leon Blum—the same Blum who in 1939 had sabotaged the French Popular Front Government and betrayed the anti-Fascist movement in Spain by initiating the non-intervention policy—stood against fusion, or even a coalition Ministry with the communists.

Thus Blum started the parliamentary game—a game for all the fishy elements, and a game in which the Communist Party leadership began to be more and more entangled, never to be able to free itself from its illusions and tentacles. Blum insisted on a national coalition of the three main parties—communists, socialists and MRP. In this policy, Blum had the full backing of the British Labour Party which had just come to power two months earlier.

De Gaulle was made Premier, but he subsequently resigned; he refused to be the leader of the Left, for he was the leader of the whole nation! The premiership went to the MRP.

The Communist Party not only joined the coalition Ministry, it also went so far as to accept the Deputy Premiership even though it was the leading party in the coalition. During its participation in the different coalition governments from October 1945 to May 1947, the communist leaders were content to hold, apart from the Deputy Premiership (Thorez), minor portfolios like industrial Production, Armaments, National Economy and Labour. The most important portfolios like Foreign Ministry, Finance, Defence etc. did not go to the biggest party. During 1945-1946 the bureaucratic machinery of the bourgeois State—the administration, army, police, law courts etc. were being built; communist Ministers could hardly influence them to the advantage of the workers.

The controversy on the making of a new constitution for France filled a whole year. The socialists played

their favourite game. At first they were with the MRP against the communists, then they veered round to the communists. The first draft constitution which obtained for them a majority in the Assembly was rejected by the popular referendum in May 1946.

In the second election held in June 1946 the influence of the communists was still on the increase in spite of the mistakes of the leaders. The CGT had increased its membership in one year from 5 million to 6½ million, and the party membership increased to 1 million. In the elections the CP increased its vote from 26% to 28.6% and won as many as 187 seats i.e. about one-third of the total in a House of 544 members. The socialist vote went down from 25% to 18%, while the MRP vote increased from 24% to 26.3%. The newly formed Gaullist party contested the elections and received only 5 seats and 1.6% of the votes. Looking at the election results and other factors in 1946 it appeared that nothing could prevent the victory of communism in France.

#### Arms Surrendered

After the election of 1946, de Gaulle came to office again. His chief anxiety was the communist armed forces. He now well understood the weakness of the communist leaders and ordered that the Francs-Tireurs must surrender their arms and disband themselves. The Francs-Tireurs violently protested, but the leaders capitulated to de Gaulle's order. In 1946 the French Communist Party had reached its apogee. From the moment it surrendered its arms and disbanded its partisans it lost all its élan vital. Since the Party had taken to the parliamentary path in 1945, its politics ceased to come out of the barrel of a gun. In short, it ceased to be revolutionary, so when on May 5, 1947 the communist ministers were ousted on flimsy grounds from the coalition Government in which they were the strongest party and in which they were holding the Defence Ministry, they had no more any backbone left for revolutionary

action. It was now clear that the French party (like the Italian party) with the present leadership will never obtain power either through the parliamentary path or by armed struggle.

In Italy, too, in the same month of May communist and socialist ministers were ousted from the coalition Government. The postwar revolutionary situation in Italy was very similar to that in France. There, too, the people were armed and well organised under the leadership of the Communist Party. There, too, the Fascist State had broken down, the bourgeois parties had ceased to exist. There, too, much of the country was liberated by the partisans and kept under their control. Party membership had risen to 2 million.

But in Italy, too, in that splendid revolutionary situation, the leadership of the party discarded the revolutionary path and instead of seizing power took to the parliamentary path. Maurice Thorez and Palmiro Togliatti were twin brothers indeed.

Four months after these developments in France and Italy, representatives of 9 European communist parties held a secret meeting in September 1947. In that first Cominform meeting, "legalism" and "parliamentarism" of the French and Italian parties were severely criticised. The representatives of the French and Italian parties made a pathetic self-criticism; they confessed to having failed to profit from their legal power and to having not properly understood the historic antagonism between Moscow and Washington. All these things were kept secret, but the Cominform resolution stated that "the main danger to the working class at present consists in underestimation of its forces and in overestimation of the imperialist camp."

After the communist ministers were driven out of the Cabinet, the degeneration of the French and Italian parties was rapid. In 10 years time party membership was reduced to less than half, from 1 million in 1947 to 425,000 in 1957. The CGT membership went down from 6½ million in 1947 to 1½ million in 1961. After

1947 there was a split in the CGT and many workers went out of it and formed a separate organisation called the Force Ouvriers. The circulation of *L'Humanite*, which had reached about 1 million, fell to only 160,000 in 1959 and *Ce Soir*, the evening daily of the party, which had a circulation of 250,000, completely stopped publication in 1955.

In the elections of 1951, the party lost half a million votes and its seats were reduced from 187 to 103. The socialists also lost considerably. De Gaulle's party, RPF (Rally of the French People), which had received only 5 seats and 1.6% of the votes in 1946 won 118 seats and received 21.8% votes in 1951. By now the French bourgeoisie was completely restored to power.

In 1956 Khrushchev's speech on "peaceful transition to socialism" created a lot of trouble in the French as well as in the Italian party and detached a large number of party workers, intellectuals and sympathisers from the party. In university, literary and artistic circles expulsions and resignations occurred in rapid succession. Some CGT leaders also resigned. In 1959 the Central Committee of the Party complained that "each month thousands of anti-communist leaflets are distributed to all members of the party" by the "extremists", "left deviationists" etc.

After the 20th Congress of the CPSU, the French (as well as the Italian) party openly accepted the line of peaceful transition to socialism through parliament. At the 15th Congress in 1959 of the French Party, Thorez said that the Gaullist regime was the tool of the monopolists and that the main objective of the party was its overthrow by "peaceful means, including utilisation of parliamentary democracy". For this task Thorez advocated an alliance with the Republicans (i.e. with the bourgeoisie) and proposed the creation of a new popular front. Since then history has amply demonstrated that wherever such anti-Marxist, revisionist policy has been followed the communist party has been turned into another social democratic party.

But one of the characteristics of parliamentary democracy is that the monopolist ruling class possesses so many "legal", "constitutional", "electoral" weapons that the communist party, even when it is able to mobilise considerable number of votes in its favour, can be rendered ineffective. After 1956, certain changes in the electoral laws were introduced. The results were immediately seen in the election of 1958. The Communist Party still received the largest number of votes, but got only 10 seats in the Assembly, while de Gaulle's Party, though it received less votes than the Communists, got 188 seats.

### History Repeated

No doubt, history sometimes repeats itself. 1946 was repeated in 1968! When in May 10 a million workers and students occupied the factories, plants, administrative offices, railway stations, schools and universities the Communist Party leaders denounced them as "anarchists", "extremists". When the workers and students were constructing barricades and fighting bloody battles with the police, the leaders said: on to the round table for a 15% wage increase.

De Gaulle ordered a new election and the communist leaders at once responded; on to the polls!

De Gaulle again appeared before the electorate as the Great Saviour. His battle-cry was—save the nation from the danger of totalitarian menace. Waldeck Rochet, leader of the CP, angrily retorted: "Unlike the Gaullist party, the communists do not want power alone, but only to have their rightful place in a government of democratic parties." Rochet further praised his party for its "orderly and wise" conduct during the workers' and students' upsurge.

In the elections out of 470 seats in metropolitan France the Gaullists increased their seats from 231 to 358, while the communists went down from 72 to 34 and the Leftist Federation from 118 to 57. For this debacle *L'Humanite* blamed the insurgent workers and students: "Every barricade, every car burned, gave tens

NOVEMBER 2, 1968

of thousands of votes to the Gaullist party."

The French debacle of 1968 was the denouement of 1945-46. During this period the parliamentary path has turned the Communist Party of France into its complete opposite. The reactionary Press, which during May had kept its mouth shut, poured out its praise for the CP leaders for their "statesmanlike" behaviour and openly declared that the two pillars of France are the bourgeoisie represented by the Gaullists, and the CP, embodying the 'reasonable' workers and that both have to co-exist in the same way as the US and the Soviet Union co-exist at present to secure stability.

But those who believe that the end of strikes and the Gaullist electoral victory will bring back the old order in France may soon have a rude awakening. The new extra-parliamentary revolutionary force represented by students and young workers is gaining not only strength but also maturity and a new Marxist-Leninist party is taking shape.

FRONTIER is available at  
TRICEL,  
Fraser Road, Patna-1



NOVEMBER 2, 1968

## The Press

### Fishing For A Crown ?

COMMENTATOR

THE one-day token strike by Central Government employees is having far-reaching repercussions. The Government has made a gesture of "leniency" towards the temporary staff who were threatened with victimisation. Why this gesture had to wait till the Prime Minister's return, prolonging the agony of thousands of employees is not understandable. Perhaps the Government wanted the gravity of the indiscipline to sink in the minds of the striking employees. The belated clemency is, however, partial. Not all the penal disabilities have been removed, and the employees will have to earn a full reprieve by good conduct over a number of years. Even this small mercy has been denied to the leaders of the strike, and they are still faced with all the penalties that the Government can think of. But the fate of the employees has been thrown into the shade by the controversy between the Union Home Ministry and the United Front Government in Kerala. Mr Chavan and Mr Namboodiripad have fallen out, providing newspapers with an occasion for airing their views on Centre-State relationship, especially in the context of the political pattern that has emerged from the fourth general election. Some of the papers have suggested that Mr Namboodiripad has taken his present stand on the States' supreme right in the matter of maintenance of law and order in their own areas with a purpose. He wants to provoke the Centre into intervention in Kerala, for that would not only end the predicament in which the UF Ministry is but also bestow on him a martyr's crown. Though the papers have no doubt that under the Constitution the Centre has an overriding authority over the States in the maintenance of law and order, they have advised Mr Chavan to stay any action which may be politically exploited by the Kerala Chief Minister.

*The Indian Express* says that the

three legislative lists embodied in the Constitution in no way detract from the overriding authority and responsibility of the Union Government and Parliament for the maintenance of law and order in every nook and cranny of the vast country which is India. The authority and responsibility of the Union Government, particularly in the field of law and order, are, therefore, countrywide and all-pervasive. Because of its novel characteristics, foreign constitutional pundits have variously described India's political system as a Co-Operative Federation or as a Federal Constitution with unitary features. For reasons which are fairly transparent Mr Namboodiripad, with his internal embarrassments at home, cocks a snook at New Delhi in the hope that the Union Government may save him from his predicament by invoking President's rule. New Delhi is unlikely to oblige. Recalling Mr Nehru's advocacy for a strong Central Government within a system blending local initiative with strong Central control the paper says that Mr Nehru made the plea when his own authority was omnipotent and unchallenged, and when the Congress party enjoyed what was virtually a monopoly of political power. Today the situation is wholly different with a multi-party pattern and with the authority of the Central Government increasingly challenged by various mandarins in the States. The Centre must govern and must be seen to govern. For some time to come the constitutional emphasis should shift from local initiative to strong Central control.

In the weekly column in *Hindusthan Standard* Ranajit Roy writes that so far as the present Centre-Kerala controversy is concerned, matters came to a head over the Central Government employees' strike. What is new in the present situation is the open and deliberate defiance of the Centre by the Kerala Government. Mr Namboodiripad makes no bones about his refusal to comply with the Centre's directives on how the Essential Services Maintenance Ordinance is to be applied in his State. He has claimed the right to exercise discretion in enforcing the provisions of the ordinance. With the

## Letters

## Marcuse And The Left

This is to point out a minor mistake made by Mr Biplab Das Gupta in his article on Student Politics in the West (*Frontier*, September 14). The name of the author of *One Dimensional Man* is Herbert, not Henry, Marcuse.

Marcuse worked in Brandeis Univ., Mass, for a long time as a professor of politics and philosophy. After being removed from the faculty of Brandeis Univ., he joined the University of California at La Jolla. Of late, he is being persecuted by elements both within and outside the university. The recent attempts by the university authorities to get rid of him was foiled by organised resistance on the part of the faculty. Very recently, the John Birch Society threatened to kill him (as well as his militant stepson) and Marcuse was reported to have

disappeared. Nobody seems to know his whereabouts at present.

Though a professed Marxist, Marcuse's writings define him more as a cynic and anarchist than a socialist revolutionary. It is well known that his rejection of Western capitalism in general and the U.S. capitalist system in particular has always been total and unequivocal. But Marcuse finds it highly unreasonable to be hopeful about any revolutionary potential of the working class in such an advanced and affluent capitalism as prevails in the United States. In his view, the military-industrial power structure in the U.S. has been able to co-opt the working class completely into the bourgeois system by allowing it to share, to a significant extent, the benefits of imperialist and neo-colonial exploitation. Thus, the possibility of a socialist revolution, in the classical sense of the term, in the United States is virtually written off by Marcuse. Instead, he argues in favour of a militant, assertive and, if necessary, violent form of struggle led and organised by students and middle-class intellectuals against the irrational system based on waste and exploitation.

It is obvious that the widespread dissent and militancy against the system, currently manifested by a somewhat amorphous group of disillusioned and radical elements of the younger generation in the West, broadly categorised as the New Left are not based on any coherent political ideology. Whether in England, France, West Germany or in the U.S. itself, the militant student movement, though significant in terms of its short-range political implications, is yet to develop a positive and tangible ideological framework on the basis of which a systematic political programme could be formulated. Probably this fact explains the acceptance by the majority of the New Left of Marcuse as their ideological spokesman who, perhaps inadvertently, has provided them with a theoretical basis for their struggle. Whether such an unorthodox theoretical model as proposed by Marcuse will prove adequate for the youth re-

bellion to carry itself through to its ultimate logical consequence is, of course, a debatable matter.

SATRAJIT DUTTA  
Halifax, Canada.

## Durgapur

Many of your readers like me will very much like to have a complete narrative in *Frontier* on the happenings on September 3 in the Durgapur Steel Plant, described by the management to be an act no less than 'sabotage' by members of the INTUC-affiliated union, patronized by the big boss of the Congress High Command. The two pronounced leaders of this union also happen to be the local Congress stalwarts. Both having lost the fourth general election to U.F. candidates saw a golden opportunity to regain their position in this area of industrial complexes by engineering a heinous game in collusion with the group of a dismissed boss of the undertaking. Their aim was three-fold—to undermine the image of the CPI(N) with charges of anti-national activities, strengthen their so-called pocket bureau and snatch precious votes in the coming mid-term election. If the reporting in the daily papers is correct, the happenings have led to a tussle between the top leaders of the different coteries within the ruling party at the Centre. Does it not show that there are more things to know—may be uglier than what we have already been told.

J. TARAFDAR  
Durgapur

For FRONTIER readers in  
West India can contact  
S. D. CHANDAVARKAR  
10, Kanara House  
Mogal Lane, Mahim  
Bombay-16

FRONTIER is available at  
CENTRAL NEWS AGENCY  
23/90 Connaught Place  
New Delhi-1

OIL FIRED PACKAGE BOILERS  
OIL FIRED PACKAGE BOILERS  
OIL FIRED PACKAGE BOILERS  
COAL FIRED BOILERS  
COAL FIRED BOILERS  
COAL FIRED BOILERS  
NU-WAY/NESTLER BURNERS  
NU-WAY/NESTLER BURNERS  
NU-WAY/NESTLER BURNERS  
OIL FIRED PACKAGE BOILERS  
COAL FIRED BOILERS  
NU-WAY/NESTLER BURNERS

**NESTLER BOILERS  
PRIVATE LIMITED**

Love Lane, Cross Lane  
Byculla, BOMBAY-27 DD

# RECESSION MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF RECESSION RECESSION

The recession has hurt us too—very much so. We could, of course, have thrown up our hands in despair. But that is **not the Indian Oxygen way of doing things**. For us the recession is a challenge. And some of the ways in which we are meeting it are these.

Our marketing Division is always on its toes studying the needs of consumers so that our products may be redesigned to meet their requirements whenever necessary. It has developed export outlets in countries in South-East and West Asia and Africa. And the search continues.

Our engineers and scientists have been engaged in intensive research to develop new and better products and save foreign exchange. Last year alone, for instance, foreign exchange worth over Rs. 36 lakhs was saved through Import Substitution. Recent examples of new products made available by Indian Oxygen to industry for the first

time in India through indigenous production are the INDARC IMR-300 Selenium Rectifier Set for welding, INDARC Submerged Arc Welding Wire and the Continuous Covered Electrode for FUSARC/CO<sub>2</sub> Automatic Arc Welding process.

New uses are being sought and found for oxygen, nitrogen and other gases which are helping Indian industry to raise productivity and improve manufacturing techniques.

Variety reduction and in-plant standardization have helped us to rationalise production and improve the quality of our goods and services.

There are many other fields too in which innovative management is helping to improve efficiency and overcome the effects of the recession.

The effort continues to find more ways of serving the Indian economy. Indian Oxygen has faith in its own as well as the country's future.



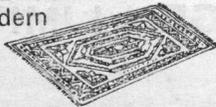
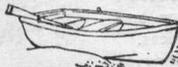
**INDIAN OXYGEN LIMITED**

# RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT GIVES VERSATILE JUTE BIG EXPORT BOOST

Throughout the wide range of jute's applications certain qualities stand out: **toughness, lightness, resilience, economy.**

That's why jute is used for wrapping and packaging, for providing tough backing for carpets, for reinforcing laminated boards.

But that's only part of the jute story. **RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT,** key words in the modern industrial world, are leading to exciting end uses for the versatile fibre. Jute is now woven as a fine fabric for the glamorous world



of fashion and furnishings. Jute is used for strength in PVC-coated pipes; it adds rigidity in the making of small boats; it is endlessly versatile. The **BIRD-HEILGERS GROUP** is in the forefront in winning new markets for jute—the versatile fibre—both here and abroad.



The Auckland Jute Co. Ltd.  
The Dalhousie Jute Co. Ltd.  
The Kinnison Jute Mills Co. Ltd.  
The Northbrook Jute Co. Ltd.  
The Union Jute Co. Ltd.  
Bird's Export Division.  
Chartered Bank Buildings, Calcutta-1

passage of time he is becoming more and more defiant of the Centre. Politically, the situation is anything but propitious for a Central take-over in Kerala. Delhi's policy appears to be to put pressure on the United Front Government in the hope that either the Front will break up or Mr Namboodiripad will relent. If the Chief Minister does so, Mr Chavan would have firmly established a precedent in favour of the Centre in the vital field of law and order. Moreover, Mr Namboodiripad would have deviated from his labour policy and become a target of attack by the working class. The outspoken manner in which Mr Namboodiripad is giving vent to his thoughts indicates that he would not mind being dismissed, if it comes to that. His feeling is that he would thereby gain politically in his own State and among the Central employees to whom he would become a hero. It is Mr Chavan, not Mr Namboodiripad, who faces a real dilemma. Roy, however, reports that a decisive step may not be taken by the Union Cabinet as sharp differences exist over the manner in which the problem should be tackled. From all accounts the Prime Minister is unlikely to back the hard-liners and dismiss the Namboodiripad Government. She has her own reasons to disapprove of such a policy.

Without going into the controversy specifically *The Hindustan Times* says it is not Mr Namboodiripad alone who has pleaded recently for a thorough reappraisal of Centre-State relations. There is no case for anyone to ask for major amendments to the Constitution. Despite recent political vicissitudes, the Constitution has repeatedly shown itself to be an ideal mix that combines overall federal power with legitimate State rights in the right proportion. What has principally gone wrong is that one or the other party—for the most part, the Centre, and from among the States, Kerala—has tended to act unwisely in exercising its rights or powers. While there is clearly no case for a major revision of the Constitution, there is, indeed, a good case for a general reappraisal. The Constitution will only be subjected to further serious strains

if a general understanding is not worked out soon enough about how precisely it should be interpreted and applied in those delicate situations where a conflict does arise between these rights and powers. A consensus of this kind could best be achieved at a meeting or conference of all-party representatives where the scope for discussions is clearly defined and narrowly circumscribed.

#### Nobel Prize

The award of this year's Nobel prize in medicine to Dr Hargobind Khorana for his pioneering work in genetics has raked up the controversy over the Government's policy towards scientists and scientific research. Angry voices have been raised against the Government's failure to stop the continued brain drain from the country, and some of the newspapers have joined the chorus. The report that Dr Khorana was unable to get a suitable job in this country has added fuel to the fire, and demands have been made from various quarters that the Government should work out a scheme of inducements which would not only prevent Indian scientists from going abroad to seek fulfilment but also bring back those who have already left the country. The Government has declared that it would not try to persuade Dr Khorana to return to India, but what its general policy towards Indian scientists abroad is going to be is not clear. Faced with a similar demand in the past, the Government had evolved a pool system under which scientists working abroad were, if they returned to India, entitled to stipends till suitable jobs could be found for them. Not a few, maybe not all of them brilliant, returned. Before the Government embarks on another scheme of inducement, it may be profitable to know how many of these scientists have been placed in jobs of their liking and how many are rotting as pool scientists. If reports are not altogether incorrect, many of them are lamenting their decision to return; some have already gone back, in others frustration abounds. In a country where every occasion is a good enough pretext for a call to patriotism not many people

will remain satisfied for long with being an idle patriot at home rather than a busy researcher abroad.

Warning that if this migratory trend is not reversed by remedial action, the country will be blowing its brains out *The Indian Express* says that Dr Khorana is not the first talented Indian scientist who was more or less compelled to seek opportunities abroad, having failed to get opportunities in the country of his birth. The danger is that, things as they are, he will not be the last either. Though the condition of research workers in science and medicine has improved in this country in the past few years, it remains quite deplorable. Barring a very few who are able to pull themselves to the top—and then very often become pillars of the establishment—even the most talented of the country's scientists and research workers get a raw deal. Research in the private sector is very limited indeed. Most of it is conducted in government institutions aided by the State. Here, the ignorance and biases of the traditional bureaucracy frustrate the men of science. If they wish to serve their country, as the vast majority of them do, they must put up with salaries and working conditions which are distinctly inferior to those in the administrative services. If they seek the satisfaction of making the maximum contribution in their chosen fields, they have to uproot themselves from the country of their birth and seek professional opportunities abroad, thus exposing themselves to the personal frustrations of the expatriate.

*The Statesman* wonders why and how the Indian scientists working abroad must be brought back home. The claim that since most of these emigrant scientists were initially educated at the expense of the Indian taxpayer, the latter probably has a sort of right on their skill and talent is largely theoretical. It is altogether another matter to ascribe to the scientists abroad all sorts of unworthy motives for staying away. They are only availing themselves of opportunities which, for one reason or another, they cannot get at home. Most important of all perhaps is the lack of recognition in this coun-

try. New Delhi has woken up to the problem of Indian scientists abroad only after one of them has been recognised by the Nobel Prize Committee in Stockholm. There was a similar reaction to Dr Narlikar's mathematical work with Professor Hoyle on the origin of the universe. Neither might ever have been heard of if they had worked in India. India's pathetic faith in what is known in North India as *vilayeti sifarish*, foreign recognition, is one of the less pleasant aspects of the national character which has survived twenty years of independence. New Delhi is entirely right in letting Dr Khorana live and work in the country of his choice; any puerile effort to get the others back will only make the country look more foolish. But behind the decision there is an element of hurt pride, made the sourer by the known deficiencies in the Government's treatment of scientific talent.

## New Czech Films

PRABODH KUMAR MAITRA

THE recent showings of Czech films in the Film Society circuit demonstrate once again the vitality of the film-makers. Veterans and new generation directors alike exhibit their virtuosity on a wide range of subject matter relating as much to the contemporary scene as also to the balloon-crazy days at the turn of the century.

Karel Zeman, the doyen of Czech movie-makers, once again bases his *The Stolen Airship* on his favourite Jules Verne. And his imagination soars higher and higher as the airship moves with the starry-eyed boys at the helm. This is traditional Zeman territory where ingenuous imagination gets uninhibited release. The colour soothes as much as it fascinates. As the boys, who force the way into the airship and cut it loose, make a dash in the air it opens new vistas till at last they are swept onto an island where they encounter new experiences, some of them dangerous too. The child's fairy-tale world becomes

authentic. Zeman's success lies in his being able to capture it and transform it into an immensely enjoyable screen version of the Verne extravaganza.

The other veteran of the Czech film scene, Otakar Vavra, disappoints us not a little. *Romance for Bugle* is a slight film on a tenuous story. One forms the impression that the director of an earlier generation tries to catch up with his versatile younger contemporaries by exhibiting needless nudity. This is pathetic. The film has not much to offer, even the story telling is jerky. Jaromir Hanzlik as the student gives an easy performance, particularly when he is dealing with his grandfahter at home. In the playground, with the girl, or in the idyllic surrounding of the riverside making love, he does not acquit himself as well. The girl and her other suitor strangely fail to make the grade. This seems due to an imbalance in characterisation and lack of concentration on essentials. Vavra instead wants to feast the eye by stripping a fleshy woman in the stream and repeats the same.

Karel Kachyna's *A Carriage to Vienna* is an excellent film depicting the silent tension of a widow whose husband has been murdered by the Germans and who is compelled to take two German soldiers away from the clutches of the enemy in her horse-drawn carriage. She stealthily throws away the compass and a few weapons but manages to retain a hatchet, presumably to do to death the young soldier. The other soldier is in a moribund state. Most of the film takes place in the forest and the carriage with two characters.

The young soldier speaks about himself and the family and the fiance with hardly any reciprocity from the widow who is nearly speechless. Nevertheless the film is quite eloquent and the build-up is gradual and telling. The woman however seems less than convincing at the end as her tenderness for the boy erupts suddenly and the suddenness is brought forth with a streak of sentimentality hardly in keeping with the tenor of the film. Once again Jaromir

Hanzlik gives a memorable performance. His adolescent antics, apparently, endear him more to the audience than to the widow, which causes the little hitch when they lie blissfully in embrace. The quality of the film is immensely heightened by its stunning photography and evocative music.

*In Sun In the Net* Stefan Uher brings us back to the area the young Czech directors are so very fond to probe—the generation gap and the adolescent hero's and for that matter the heroine's, place in the whole scheme of things. But here the confrontation loses much of its edge—the early disdain and seeming irreconcilability making room for qualified acceptance, even a helping hand. The observation of the seniors is wryly cynical without a trace of sting. But even here the absorption is with self with a big S as in the case of the hero Fajolo played with resolute confidence by Marian Bielik who thinks and responds to in terms of symbols. The camera and the transistor sum up his existence. These are the objects through which he sees and hears the mechanical monotone of the grey contours of existence. The first few minutes of the film on the rooftop complete with radio and TV aeriels give one the feeling of a science fiction world, a world inhabited by people whom it is difficult to completely perceive. A piercing whistle acts as a refrain. The hero is listless even in the company of the girl who feels the lack of human warmth in him. They represent the horoscope of the human situation where everybody gropes to find a resolution.

The weaker part of the film is the concentration on the family feud of the girl which highlights some none too relevant part of the story. Maybe to emphasise that to have a niche in the world the younger ones should lend a helping hand to their older folk. This is mildly hortatory. The youngsters find themselves estranged once more but their heart is in the right place.

Photography admirably captures the grey world of reality and the Crusoe like world by the Danube inhabited by another old couple. And the dialogue is poetry itself.