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MR K. COMES AGAIN

On Other Pages

COMMENTS	2
VIEW FROM DELHI KOSYGIN PICNIC FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT	4
CALCUTTA DIARY CHARAN GUPTA	5
CZECHOSLOVAKIA 1948 BIBEK ROY	7
ON NAPALM M. S. PRABHAKAR	10
THE PRESS DISSOLUTION IN U. P.	13
BOOK REVIEW	15
FIVE PAINTERS BY AN ART CRITIC	16
LETTERS	17

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THE Ministry of External Affairs will expectedly crow over the fact that Mr Kosygin lunched here, meaning Rashtrapati Bhavan in Delhi, on his way back from Pakistan. What he told Mrs Indira Gandhi is, of course, unknown, especially after the official account which is rarely meant to enlighten anyone. Matters of mutual interest are always discussed on such occasions ; and nobody knows what the matters are. In Karachi, however, the communiqué spoke of the need for India and Pakistan "normalizing" relations so that less money goes for defence and more for development. Few can quarrel with so pious a sentiment. It is unlikely, however, that the Soviet Premier flew so many thousands of kilometres to preach so obvious a sermon. What else could he have up his sleeve ?

There have been reports meanwhile that President Ayub Khan got rather less change out of Mr K than India had feared. This is where the curtain of ignorance comes down, for we have never been told which country has got how much of what from the United States or the Soviet Union. The least informed people in the world about Indian defence are the people of India. It is yet possible that President Ayub's manoeuvre has not quite paid off. Islamabad's continuing friendship with China may not be the best chit for Soviet aid. The Kremlin may also have calculated that Mr K's stop-over in Delhi would prop up Mrs G. who probably needs such external aid for surviving her friends and well-wishers.

We might know a little more about what has been going on between Russia on the one hand and India and Pakistan on the other if such illiterate phrases as "normalization of relations" were not so much in use. What, pray, are "normal" relations between India and Pakistan ? The centuries-old Hindu-Muslim strife is not dissolved by being called something else. Genteel vagueness on the subject yet creates tensions in Allahabad and Karimganj, to say nothing of other places ; and the senseless agitation over the Rann of Kutch can hardly improve matters. Perhaps, after all, Mr Kosygin is "normalizing" relations between India and Pakistan by distributing his august presence more or less equally to the two countries which should be ashamed of themselves that for twenty years they have failed to sort out any of their problems without benefit

ing that as a constituent party of the UF and a party whose leader is also the leader of the Front, the BKD in West Bengal cannot collaborate with a renegade party. This is not the sole overture of the BKD leadership to other parties for a third force. Mr Amiya Nath Bose has said that his newly formed Azad Hind Sangh is trying to form a "national front" in West Bengal with the BKD, PSP, SSP, and Forward Bloc; all-India leaders of these parties have already been contacted, and the chances of such a front emerging are "bright". Mr Mukherjee has pleaded ignorance about the move; so have West Bengal leaders of other parties. Mr Mukherjee's ignorance may not mean anything; he may be confronted with a "fait accompli" by his colleagues in the national executive, and there is no doubt that he will, as is his wont, capitulate.

In the circumstances, even if the BKD national executive grants exemption to its West Bengal unit, doubts will reasonably persist about the party's real intention. The exemption may be a subterfuge to help the State unit to gain many more seats in the mid-term poll than it would if it were to fight it alone or in alliance with ineffectual groups. After all, the BKD national executive has not condemned Mr Ajoy Mukherjee for what he was about to do on October 2 last or for his clandestine negotiation with the Congress that preceded it, though all these were contrary to the party's declared policy. All that the BKD national executive is interested in is a return to its pristine glory of being a party of chief ministers and the advantages that go with it. The party is not sure that if the United Front is returned to power Mr Mukherjee will again be the Chief Minister of West Bengal. Mr Mukherjee himself has this fear, and the national executive is playing upon it to secure his acquiescence in its policy of anti-Communist collaboration. The BKD's opposition to the Congress is mere froth; and the so-called third force is only a trade-name for a pressure group which it hopes will hold the balance between the Congress and the UF after the

mid-term poll, a poll on which, for lack of any immediate alternative, the leftists have set their brave hearts on. It will have no qualms in selling itself to the Congress if the price is attractive; and Dr P. C. Ghosh has shown that the Congress can be generous in this matter. The West Bengal BKD, if not Mr Mukherjee, is sometimes given the benefit of the doubt, but it has yet to show that it can stand up to the party's all-India leadership and dares to break away if necessary. The State unit has to blame the truancy of its central leaders if its assurances are taken with cynicism and even total disbelief.

Suharto Era

A correspondent writes :

Anti-Communist witch hunt and the protracted 'de-mythification' campaign against the father of Indonesian independence have now reached their logical end. With the PKI driven underground and Bung Karno under house arrest, the time, it seems, is propitious for General Suharto to ascend the throne. Late last month while thousands of students shouted slogans against Suharto the People's Congress elevated him from acting president to president. This, however, is no military dictatorship. For hasn't Suharto repeatedly asserted that he is opposed to any form of military dictatorship? In his presidential address too he declared: "we will firmly uphold the principles of democracy, . . . we are determined to carry out the wishes of the people." Such minor factors as the promise to hold a general election after a year of his rule as acting president or the packing of the assembly by his own men by replacing the old and creating new members should not deter one from appreciating his love for the people and democratic practice. He promises to step down from power as early as 1973 when the Congress elected by universal suffrage will choose a new president.

Meanwhile, this is the Great Suharto era. In his anxiety to salvage Indonesia from economic ruin Gene-

ral Suharto has rallied round him U. S. trained advisers. The foreign-owned enterprises nationalised during the Sukarno era are back in the hands of the former owners. Djakarta has been granted the privilege of having twelve foreign banks. Suharto now plans to open the womb of Indonesia to foreign capital a la Mehta. In a soil fertilized by Communist blood 'freedom' at last is flowering. That Suharto is going to follow up his ascendancy by a tribute-paying visit to Washington is in the fitness of things.

But Indonesians do not seem to share the happiness of the Americans. PKI flags and the Bung's smile have disappeared, but so has rice. Shortage of rice and skyrocketing prices have led to a massive demonstration on the streets demanding rice and an end to the dictatorship. Armoured cars were deployed on the streets and machine-guns were at the ready all around. Inflation, 39% only for January, is galloping. The high-powered Corruption Eradication Team appointed by Suharto has used its power to clear notorious officials of charges of embezzlement and corruption. The pro-Sukarno section of the PNI, which resolutely refuses to join the New Order, dominates Central Java. Other parties, jealous of the growing power of the army, are restive, while Nasution, the erstwhile comrade-in arms, seems to provide the focus of a potential opposition within the army. Still more alarming is the news of the resurgence of the PKI. Guerilla activities in South Sulawesi, West Kalimantan and Central Java are on the increase. The main concern of the Djakarta Government, as one Western correspondent reported, was "the danger of the emergence of an armed band in accordance with best classical teachings of Mao Tse-tung." Russian helicopters flown by the Indonesian army may not succeed any more in their task than their U. S. counterparts in Vietnam.

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of clergy in the form of the World Bank or Mr Kosygin or somebody else. It is no secret that efforts by third parties, such as the Tashkent agreement, left both contenders inconsolable, when not killing a party like Lal Bahadur Shastri. Mr Kosygin's latest sorties seem the more dubious because of their improvisation. It is not clear why the trip to East Pakistan was cancelled. It is not clear why a K and G meeting at Palam was expanded to a lunch at Rashtrapati Bhavan. What is even more unclear is where both New Delhi and Moscow are being too clever by half and not adding up to one to the advantage of either. In the interim we can only recast a well-known French saying and say that the hearth may have its reasons of which the hearth knows nothing.

Disastrous Obsession

It was apparent at Dimapur recently, when representatives of the Naga underground met those of Assam at a conference inaugurated by none other than the Governor, Mr B. K. Nehru, that the Nagas are divided. Perhaps only less divided than the Government of India, which is saying something. The nature of the assurances demanded by Mr Nehru or his spokesmen on the subject of aid from China for a sovereign Nagaland outside the Indian Union is far from clear. Perhaps only less clear than the nature of the assurances given by the Naga underground on the same score. Yet the conference, the first of its kind, may have been useful to the extent that it offered both sides an opportunity to understand each other. Whether the opportunity was taken by either will be known only in the weeks and months to come. Dimapur will have served more than its tentative purpose if some sort of a line of communication has been established between Shillong, meaning Delhi, and the underground. Delhi's ignorance of realities has long been matched only by the underground's lack of knowledge of what India can or cannot do with Nagaland.

The gain yet remains that the

cease-fire has been extended to the end of July—perhaps in spite of Mr B. K. Nehru's somewhat assertive speech. The example of many European countries getting together to preserve their independence must have seemed gibberish to his audience. What has Europe got to do with it? No more comprehensible may have been the reference to small countries losing their independence by seeking aid from big countries, an obvious reference to China which has become an obsession in Delhi. What, the underground representatives may have wondered, has China got to do with it? In relation to Nagaland, is not India nearly as big a country as China? Was Governor Nehru suggesting that by seeking India's protection Nagaland might lose its independence? The Governor also used the word "country" more than once in relation to Nagaland, as though it might be a different entity from India; this may or may not be actionable but it does show that thinking on Nagaland is not very clear in many quarters.

A little less of diplomacy, at Dimapur almost viceregal in the hands of Mr Nehru, and a little more of honesty may yet do both sides a lot of good. The men of the underground ought to know that if they could have seized sovereignty they would have done so long ago without so much as by-your-leave from Delhi. On the other hand, Delhi ought to know that its military effort in Nagaland was not a great success for over ten years. Force did not succeed in subduing the fiercely freedom-loving Nagas. In the circumstances, both sides are wise to accept the cease-fire as an opportunity to sort things out in other ways. The British knew that the Naga area could not be administered like other parts of India; Delhi needs to realise that Kohima is not Kanpur.

A Fraudulent Move

The Gandhian pretensions of the Bharatiya Kranti Dal do not seem to be in any conflict with the continuous double-talk of its leaders. If Mr Mahamaya Prasad Sinha is to be taken seriously, the Congress still re-

mains the party's enemy number one; but the BKD's current philandering with various political parties and non-descript groups to create a third force can only delight the Congress. None of the three former Chief Ministers who gave the party some respectability at its birth saw anything wrong in drawing upon the Communists to keep themselves in power. Only after all the three had been out of office for one reason or another did the party declare a jihad on Communists, and its anti-Communism is daily gaining in stridence. Politics in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have many common strands; casteism, communalism and Hindi fanaticism are not politically dispensable factors there, and a party can count on some immediate gains if it chooses to ally itself with such obscurantism. The situation in West Bengal is different, and that is the reason why the State BKD has appealed to its all-India leadership for exemption from the anti-Communist programme without questioning its motive and purpose. What assurance—it should have been an explanation—Mr Ajoy Mukherjee gave the United Front has not been fully disclosed; but published reports indicate that he banks on the political realism—a euphemism for opportunism in this instance—of the all-India leadership and hopes that it will agree to the State unit's request.

Mr Mukherjee may have his own reason for entertaining such a hope but the activities of the BKD leadership do not sustain it. While he was assuring the UF here of abiding loyalty of the West Bengal unit, the party's national executive was negotiating in New Delhi with the PSP for close collaboration. The negotiation has resulted in a national joint action committee for "coordination in all fields between the two parties". The PSP in West Bengal has decided to quit the UF and try to create a "non-Congress, non-Communist" bloc. There are dissidents no doubt, but the official group has the full backing of the party's all-India leaders. The appointment of a joint action committee can only mean that the BKD national executive is arranging a BKD-PSP liaison in the State, completely ignor-

Kosygin Picnic

FROM A POLITICAL
CORRESPONDENT

SUPER Power interests converge on India. The flow of PL480 aid and Soviet rupee trade have to be maintained to keep it "a stable and going concern" as Mrs Indira Gandhi calls it. Despite massive Soviet orders to help Indian and British-run industries, the recession in Calcutta's engineering units would linger on for another four months. All the same the private sector has acquired a vital stake in the stability of the Government in New Delhi.

Whenever the Prime Minister's morale is drooping, it needs bolstering through a safari or the visit of some foreign dignitary. In January, the Foreign Office circulated stories of an impending Kosygin visit for the Republic Day celebrations. When there was no Soviet response and not even the suggestion of a date, it went into tantrums because if Mr Kosygin visited Pakistan before he thought of India, Mrs Gandhi's morale would have been shattered. She had been to Moscow four times as Prime Minister with no prospect of a reciprocal gesture. Mr Kosygin did come, after all. But three months later, when he visited Iran and then Pakistan, the Foreign Office was in tantrums again. After the rebuff to its attempt to stage the Vietnam talks in New Delhi, the Foreign Office badly needed to ground an overflying Kosygin to restore Mrs Gandhi's world-leader image. Mr K's political refuelling halt turned out to be another picnic to help Mrs G regain a little of her lost confidence.

In his anxiety to establish his country's "Asian presence" in the sub-continent, Mr Kosygin has had to do quite a bit of tight-rope walking. India has apprehensions that the Soviet Union might decide to supply military hardware to Pakistan. But Pakistan has always thought that the Soviet Union was violating the Tash-

kent agreement by aiding India's defence potential. There has been an outcry in the Pakistani Press about the Soviet sale of 100 to 150 SU (khai-7 fighter bombers (of an advanced model which even the East European countries have not been able to get) to India, several hundred air-to-air and ground-to-air missiles, five freighter or destroyer escorts and six submarines. India has acknowledged buying submarines and not other hardware reported to have been sold. This was the major point of talks at Rawalpindi and President Ayub Khan knew that there was little chance of the Soviet Union stopping supplies to India and therefore Pakistan could get some too. By all accounts, he was not convinced about the explanation offered by Mr Kosygin, who cannot afford to alienate Pakistan by supporting India whole hog. What he expects of President Ayub Khan is not very clear but there is little doubt that Mr Kosygin would like an early settlement on Kashmir. There has been no let-up in Soviet pressure for such a settlement. The British pull-out from the east of Suez calls for a new role by the Soviet navy in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea after 1971. Soviet strategy in South Asia is undergoing a major change and it would hardly be surprising if Soviet arms reach Pakistan via Iran.

The biggest Pakistani gain from Mr Kosygin's visit is the promise of aid for two major projects—a steel plant in the western wing and an atomic power plant for East Pakistan. When India wanted to go in for nuclear power stations, the Soviet response was far from encouraging. After a good deal of knocking about, Canadian aid could be got for India's projects. Even when the Kalpakkam project was in doubt for want of collaborators, there was no Soviet interest in it. But the new solicitude for Pakistan's atomic power plants must have intrigued New Delhi.

The United States was once charged with starting an arms race in the sub-continent. But the Soviet Union might be playing the same game between India and Pakistan, before finding itself the role of a gendarme.

SSP Crisis

Dr Lohia was an uncompromising iconoclast and would have loved to destroy the SSP just as he loved to destroy the Congress. An inexorable logic is working itself out in the form of a serious crisis overtaking the party.

The decision of the Kerala unit to quit the party is added proof that the SSP, like the Jana Sangh, is a party of Hindi chauvinism with no stakes outside the cow country. The need to carry a strong non-Hindi unit in Kerala along inhibited the leadership's Hindi chauvinism a little but from now on it would be under no compulsion to take note of the Muslim susceptibilities in Malabar or the anti-Hindi sentiment in the South.

The SSP has had no ideology or an all-India vision. Its perspective has shrunk further with the defection of the Kerala unit. After Dr Lohia's death the leadership tussle was mainly between the Maharashtra wing (Mr S. M. Joshi, Mr Madhu Limaye and Mr George Fernandes) and the Hindi wing (represented by Mr Raj Narain), and the Kerala unit was playing the balancing role. The Hindi wing does not consider the leaders from Maharashtra sufficiently Bharati. In Maharashtra it is a party of middle-class office-goers and factory workers. But a section in Bombay wants to jump on the Shiv Sena bandwagon after discovering great revolutionary potential in the storm-trooper brigade. Which is as it should be, because the SSP has always claimed to combine economic radicalism with nationalism (as Hitler did in his National Socialist Party). Mr George Fernandes, who does not belong to Maharashtra though he has functioned in Bombay and draws his support from the non-Maharashtrians, is perhaps the only leader opposed to any clandestine or open understanding with the Shiv Sena. He has been the Shiv Sena's target already. In the cow country, the SSP has manipulated the Kayasth, Yadav and Chamar caste loyalties and in Uttar Pradesh it is the party of the Thakur landlords. There is very little socialism about the party and its majority communalism can always pass for nationalism.

Yet a revolt of the party's infrastructure is in the offing in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. A myth is about to disintegrate. When the Congress was breaking up the Left was unprepared for it. When the United Fronts were cracking, the Congress was unable to fill the vacuum. The Congress itself is disintegrating.

The current political instability, like defections, is largely a phenomenon of the Hindi belt. In West Bengal, the Ministry was not thrown out through an Assembly vote. The dismissal of the United Front Ministry was an act of political vindictiveness. But in Uttar Pradesh the Governor acted right up to the point of suspending the legislature but its dissolution raises serious issues. The Congress leadership at the Centre would not have liked a mid-term election there but the Governor's report left no choice. Mr Chavan has always tried to promote the legend that the Centre does not give any instruction to the Governor and everything is left to the Governor's discretion. With utmost reluctance a divided Central Cabinet had to accept the Governor's recommendation for a mid-term election based on his subjective judgment. Now the Centre's anxiety is to ensure that the Uttar Pradesh poll takes place before West Bengal's or at least both the States have their elections on the same day.

While there is instability in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, no one talks of Orissa among the non-Congress States. A virtual two-party model has emerged there and the State is hardly in the news. There is no threat to the Madras and Kerala ministries immediately.

Last week's all-party exercise on defections did not lead to anything. No suggestion to check it can get past the legal hurdles and the studies prepared by the Home and Law Ministries confess to a feeling of helplessness in the matter. It is the Age of Defection, first encouraged on this side of freedom by the great sage C. Rajagopalachari in the composite Madras in 1952.

April 22, 1968

Calcutta Diary

CHARAN GUPTA

THE country has been taken over by racketeers which is why anything goes, including the hoax that is flourishing in the name of the New Agricultural Strategy, in caps. With blessings from the Americans—who can be counted in their scores in Krishi Bhavan, New Delhi—the strategy has by now been refined into a show which should really get known as the New Great Thievery, in caps. The philosophy of the strategy, information from Delhi suggests, is unsweet and simple: forget about the small peasants and landless cultivators, forget the problems of the holdings belonging to 95 per cent or more of the cultivating community, concentrate on the rich, lush farmers at the very top, pamper them, shower them with credit, provide them with fertiliser, evolve an irrigation programme which will ensure that the bulk of the water would be made available to the VIP farmers, spend precious foreign exchange to get the tractors and power tillers, pesticides and insecticides for them, do not impose any tax on them, do not irritate them by talking of any producer levy, guarantee them prices which are three or four times the internal prices, and, hey presto, there will be an agricultural revolution in the country.

The 'Strategy' is now in the third year of its execution. During the first two years, while money and resources were being bestowed upon the Enlightened, Privileged Ones, no noteworthy results were forthcoming in terms of rising production. The blame for the misfortune was then placed on bad weather, even though everybody was agreed that the very purpose of the Strategy was to free Indian agriculture from the vagaries of nature. Following the hoary principle of 'heads-I-win tails-you-lose', it is only in the current year, when there have been excellent rains, that we are inundated by claims about the Great Agricultural Revolution which has already supposedly overtaken us. There is little

effort to analyse what proportion of this year's crop increase is on account of the bounty of nature and what proportion is causally related to the 'heroic' efforts launched by the top peasants. Even a rooky statistician could have told our politicians and civil servants that to infer a revolution on the basis of a single year's observation is to exhibit crass illiteracy. Where the newspapers write what they are asked to write, a revolution can be manufactured overnight. You keep on repeating the same cliché a couple of dozen times and a fact gets formally 'born' in this country; having been born, it then passes into theology.

* * *

The money and inputs have of course been provided by the Government to enable the big farmers to initiate the so-called Revolution. This transfer of resources is made possible by the extra burden on the taxpayers, who have been systematically squeezed over the last few years. The credit for the Revolution however does not go to the taxpayers; it goes to the top peasants who have been propitiated and subsidised beyond redemption. Since these gentlemen-farmers call the political tune, the input subsidy is further supplemented by offering them inordinately high prices for their products, which worsen the plight of the overwhelming mass of the population, raise industrial costs and make it utterly impossible to make any headway in export trade. The rich peasants always gain: in the drought years, we have to offer them high prices because this is what market forces dictate; but even in a good year such as the present one, the politicians would argue that we must continue to pay the farmers the prices which prevailed in the 'famine' years so as not to disturb their 'state of expectations'. We must be gingerly, we must pay homage to our kulaks whatever the season. In Parliament and elsewhere, righteous indignation boils over at the slightest suggestion for a lowering of

procurement prices ; how dare people talk in terms of a reduction in prices, when the farmers, through their blood and sweat, are trying to provide us with food, without which we have to continue begging from abroad? The case for the opposition goes by default. Nobody has the temerity to point out that, even amongst the agriculturalists, at least 50 per cent are net purchasers of foodgrains. By keeping prices high, you scarcely help them, in fact you ensure that they would very soon get squeezed out of agriculture, and some of their land would pass into the hands of the gentlemen-farmers, who have now also been blessed by a special tax rebate by Mr Morarji Desai. The rich peasants can still deliver a big chunk of the vote in the countryside, and they are backed by American economic theory; so others might abide the question, they are free to continue the pillage.

* *

The Americans don't surprise me. They have, after all, an unerring instinct to patronise the most reactionary class forces in whichever country they go. In the present instance they also happen to be wrong in their economics, for the theory of the New Agricultural Strategy slurs over several basic issues of the Indian economy. The rest of the world has, for quite some time, become aware of the fact that the Americans often go astray in their prognoses and prescriptions, but such knowledge is not yet permitted to permeate into this country. (Even as Johnson throws in the sponge, we decide to send 'observers' to Singapore to join the johnnies from the puppet administrations of South Korea, South Vietnam, Indonesia and Thailand for discussion of 'problems of Asian economic development'.) Here there has been a wholesale acceptance of the American line that for ushering in an agricultural revolution, all you have to do is to subsidise your rich peasants and offer them high prices. As the academics would say, the proposition ignores the structural problem. Things might still turn out to be all right with the 'Strategy' in such States as Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Maharashtra and

Madhya Pradesh, where big holdings—owned by a few—constitute the major proportion of the total cultivable area. They however do not comprise the entire country. If one shifts attention to the eastern States—West Bengal, Assam, Orissa and Bihar—and to Kerala, the picture is altogether different: but for aberrations in the years of exceptionally good rains—when more acreage came under cultivation—agriculture has remained more or less stagnant in these States. The regional unevenness is easily explained. Where fragmentation has extended fairly deep and a considerable proportion of the cultivable area is under holdings of less than five acres in size, the American theory of growth-through-pampering—the few fails to work. The organizational problems multiply, the identification of the rich peasants who could be depended upon to deliver the goods becomes difficult. One or two top farmers, with proper political connections, still extract a bonanza from out of the distribution of subsidised inputs, but the impact on agricultural productivity is minimal. The short-term temptation of disposing of the inputs at fancy prices often gets the better of the desire to experiment with scientific agriculture.

* *

A racket is a racket is a racket. The New Agricultural Strategy suits the civil servants because it suits the politicians, who are all for more bounty for themselves and their near and dear ones. In season and out of season, year in and year out, subsidies are being doled out and agricultural prices are being jacked up. I shall not talk of the built-in inequity in the distribution of seeds, irrigation water, fertilisers and pesticides in the countryside, where the extent of the scandal baulks imagination. Let me only refer to what is happening with cooperative credit. Cooperative credit societies were originally set up to offer protection to the small peasants from the exploitation of the moneylenders; they have now been turned into a major instrument of exploitation in the rural areas. The small peasants cannot offer any collateral, and cannot therefore get any money from the societies.

Most of the available credit is hogged by the big farmers who have taken over the cooperative movement, lock, stock and barrel. Credit, offered at 4 per cent interest at the source by the Reserve Bank of India, rises to the level of 12 per cent by the time it reaches the villages after passing through the sieve of the cooperative societies; the margin is pocketed by the gentlemen-farmers who manage them. The story does not quite end here. Instances are not lacking where the credit from the societies in fact is used to replenish the coffers of the moneylenders, who in turn loan it out to indigent small farmers and agricultural workers at fantastic rates ranging to 50 per cent or even more.

* *

It is natural that the Congress, the Swatantra Party and the Jana Sangh would keep quiet over this state of affairs, since it is so conducive to their own class interests. But what is happening to the great heroes of the Left, whose social conscience is reputedly bubbling all the time? There are any number of learned discourses at plenums and central committee meetings analysing the precise character of the present state of the Indian polity and the Indian economy. But once these gentlemen of the Left step out of the world of abstractions and face the realities of everyday happening, they lose interest. Neither in Parliament nor in the State Assemblies, not a squeak has emitted from the Left politicians against the way the New Agricultural Strategy is working. West Bengal has forty members in the Lok Sabha, a majority of them allegedly of Leftist persuasion. None of them has been heard to speak on the evils of the agricultural programme in so far as it has affected the State's particular interests, nor have they protested against the further tilting of the economic balance against the small peasants and the landless workers. They have not demurred at the high procurement prices; they have not demanded imposition of heavy taxes on the affluent farmers either. Even at the local level, their entire energy is expended in trying to avert some of the consequences of the New Strategy; there is

no attempt, organised or otherwise, to resist the Strategy itself.

* *

Partly this phenomenon reflects the decline of thinking among the forces of the Left. Fatalism of a queer sort has taken over: since Marx-Lenin-Stalin Mao Tse-tung have already spelled out the manner in which alienation will progress in society and the nodal point will be reached, where is the need for supplementary thinking? Let the time be better spent on annotating the old texts, or, alternately, on keeping in trim the organisation which will take over once the revolution comes about, as it is bound to come about.

* *

Partly the Leftists in this State have also been caught in a trap of their own making. Given the United Front, they have now to carry the cross of social-enemies-turned-political allies. How do you speak harsh words about strategy which benefits some of your electoral bedfellows; the latter would immediately cry foul. The United Front has thus been a great leveller: it merges your politico-economic ethos with the ethos of a jotedar who happens to be your colleague on the Front, and whose basic qualification is perhaps that Mr Atulya Ghosh does not like his looks—or perhaps that he on his part did not like Mr P. C. Sen's imposing producer levy in November 1965. It is such an easy criterion for being labelled a 'progressive' in this State these days.

For FRONTIER readers in
West India can contact

S. D. CHANDAVARKAR

10, Kanara House
Mogal Lane, Mahim
Bombay-16

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Czechoslovakia 1948

BIBEK ROY

WHILE the XX Congress of the CPSU was proclaiming the possibility of a "pacific and parliamentary road to socialism" Mikoyan came forward to cite the example of Czechoslovakia. In the familiar arsenal of Western cold-war propaganda about Soviet expansionism, the so-called Czech coup still looms large¹. It may be of some interest then to recount and analyse the events that took place just twenty years ago.

To put those events in their proper perspective one may note some of the key elements of the socio-economic panorama of that country. Already before the war it was highly industrialized, comparable to France and Germany². Of the total working population only 26% were in agriculture whereas 38% were engaged in industry and mining; the remaining 27% were in trade and distribution, administration, etc. In terms of national income the relative contribution of agriculture was even less, for the productivity (in terms of net output) of agricultural labour was less than one-half of that in industry. Even inside the industrial sector there was a preponderance of the more advanced industries. Thus by far the largest number of workers was to be found in engineering and other metal industries, while textiles came a poor second; next came mining, glass and ceramics, food-processing and so on. The foreign trade pattern provided a similar picture. The 1938 export figures showed the manufacturing sector contributing 72% of the total, while raw materials and semi-manufactures accounted for 20% and food products for 8% only; the corresponding breakdown for imports was 30%, 57% and 13% respectively.

Like other industrially advanced countries Czechoslovakia had its fair share of monopolies in various branches of production as well as a close link between industrial and financial capital. The banking scene was dominated by the Big Four in Prague, one

of whom had a controlling interest in 50 large industrial firms spread all over the economy. Foreign capital as such did not have a major role. In agriculture the big landholders dominated the scene. According to the last pre-war census of land holdings taken in 1930-31, 44% of the farms were below 2 hectares, the next two groups of 2-5 and 5-10 hectares accounting for 27% and 16%; as for the total acreage under cultivation nearly one-half of the total area was cultivated by the top 1% of the farms, while the bottom 61% had a bare 16% of the land at its disposal. Obviously the overwhelming majority of the countryside was made up of the poor peasants and the landless labourers.

While the country as a whole was quite prosperous, there was a world of difference between the Czechs and the Slovaks; the latter were economically very backward and had an equally backward social set-up. The Slovak patriots used to think that their region was deliberately starved of industry because the capitalists mostly happened to be Czechs. There was a large measure of truth in this, but this is typical of capitalism practically everywhere.

The pre-war political set-up could be broadly characterized as bourgeois democratic. Parliament functioned as in other Western countries; Communists and left-wing Social Democrats had a large following but the majority was with the bourgeois and peasant parties that scrupulously left the leftists out of power. President Benes was resolutely anti-Hitler and had a security pact with the West as well as the USSR, although as a lifelong liberal he always preferred a closer relationship with the former.

After Munich

The great betrayal at Munich and subsequent Nazi occupation completely altered the political contours. That the government collapsed very easily before the Nazi giant is perfectly understandable, but remarkable indeed was the number of collaborationists. A puppet regime was set up in Slovakia that thrived on the popular anti-Czech sentiment. Most of the

Czech capitalists worked their factories at the behest of the German masters. There was at first little resistance to the invaders, but this came almost exclusively from the Communists. The recently deposed President Novotny was one of those active among the workers and was duly dispatched along with fellow comrades to the Mathausen concentration camp (which he ultimately fled). Only towards the end of the war after the Soviets had shown the way, resistance was organised on a big enough scale. "People's Committees" were put up mainly by the Communists, towards the end of 1944; these formed the nucleus of Red power in the countryside as well as in towns. The country was finally liberated by the Soviet Red Army but it withdrew completely by the end of 1945. The Soviets thus acquired an immense popularity with the Czechs who, according to an anti-Communist historian, developed an "uncritical admiration for all things Russian"³.

Immediately after liberation a National Front Government was formed by all the anti-Nazi parties like the CP, the Social Democrats, the National Socialists of President Benes, the Catholic People's Party and the Slovak Democrats. The common call was for "national concord". However, there was countrywide chaos and confusion as in most war-devastated countries. It came to an end in October 1945 with the unanimous adoption of the famous Kosice Programme that had three main features, namely, partial nationalization, agrarian reforms and a two-year rehabilitation plan. The agrarian reforms were essentially moderate in character, giving land to the tiller without compensation to the big landholders many of whom were either Germans foisted by the occupying Power or else collaborators. On the other hand, the programme of land reforms, specially the resettlement of Czech peasants on the erstwhile German farms in the Sudetanland was brilliantly successful in turning the peasantry into a militant force devoted to socialism and full of gratitude to the CP.

In industry, too, the properties of

all Germans and collaborators were confiscated; most of the pre-war Jewish owners had been earlier killed off under Hitler and their properties came to be vested in the State. In addition, all firms beyond a certain size and all those of "national importance" were nationalized. The maximum permissible size of a privately owned undertaking was laid down separately for each industry; this ceiling in terms of labour force varied between 150 and 500. According to contemporary reports, the Workers' Councils in different industries played a very crucial role in this context⁴. Communists and Social Democrats worked very closely, while the less radical parties were all too eager to salvage what they could for the private and the cooperative sectors. Klement Gottwald then the leader of the CP, declared that their object was "not to proceed by steps but at one stroke". However, private industry was still left with large and decisive sectors. In all only 58% of the industrial labour force came under the State sector; in basic industries this ratio varied between 50% and 100% while for consumer goods it ranged between 15% and 50%. This state of affairs continued more or less intact right up to February 1948.

That this programme had full popular backing was underlined in the parliamentary elections of May 1946. The Marxist parties came out victorious with over 50% votes (of which the CP alone had 38%) and 152 of the 300 seats. Gottwald now took up the premiership, (giving up party secretaryship to Rudolf Slansky), but the National Front continued with Benes as President. A new optimism filled the air: they began to talk of Czechoslovakia as a bridge between the Socialist East and the Capitalist West. Benes was happy at this "transition from pure liberalism to a system when the socialist elements have a considerable, if not a dominating, voice". Gottwald waxed eloquent about this "democracy of a new type".

Winds of Change

Within a year and half things began to change. In July 1947 the

entire Czech Cabinet accepted the Marshall Aid Plan proposed by the USA, without consulting Moscow. Then President Benes wrote to Stalin (possibly without the consent of his own Cabinet) expressing his desire to have a political and military pact with France. In the meanwhile far more important things were happening outside that left their long and deep shadows over events inside Czechoslovakia.

The Western Powers had already prepared their battleguns well for the Cold War. Unable to dislodge Tito in Yugoslavia, the British Army had crushed the Communist-led anti-Nazi Greek Resistance Movement by the beginning of 1946 with the active help of Greek fascists and reactionaries. Then Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' speech, formally inaugurating the Cold War, was delivered in March 1946. And yet the Soviet side came to the Moscow Conference on 10 March 1947 full of hope, according to an American eye-witness, that all outstanding postwar issues could be settled amicably with the Western Allies. But on March 12 burst the bombshell of the notorious Truman Doctrine calling for the containment of Communism in Europe and asserting American supremacy. Moscow reacted sharply and the conference ended in an impasse. The American riposte came in May in the form of the Marshall Plan whose express purpose was to defend "freedom", including such "free" regimes as those in Greece and Turkey, against subversion. During the same month the socialist Premier Ramadier kicked the French Communists (then the largest party with nearly 40% votes) out of the Cabinet, and a few months later his Home Minister Jules Moche let loose police terror on striking Communist miners in Northern France. In Italy Togliatti's CP met with a similar fate in an almost identical situation.

Against this background it was no wonder that Stalin advised the Czechs against accepting the Marshall Aid or entering into any pact with an anti-Communist France that had been already turned into an American satellite. The Czech Cabinet agreed to

both these suggestions unanimously. But then three events greatly poisoned the atmosphere. Three non-Marxist Ministers claimed to have received parcels containing explosives, although each one was apprehended in time. An investigation carried out by the Minister of Justice (one of the above three) found a Communist Deputy guilty; the latter was promptly relieved of his parliamentary immunity and along with a large number of other Communists sent to jail. They were also accused of organizing arms caches in Moravia. Immediately afterwards a plot engineered by Anglo-Saxon spies was unravelled implicating the Slovak Democrats and Benes' National Socialists. On 15 September a new plot by Slovak fascists to kill President Benes was unearthed. The Communist Chief Minister of Slovakia reconstituted the regional Cabinet, the Slovak trade unions threatened a general strike against the plotters and finally control over the Slovak police passed into the hands of the CP and the Social Democrats. In the Czech parts of the country the Communist Home Minister Nosek had already carried out some important changes in the administrative personnel, weeding out the reactionaries; at the same time the CP Secretary Slansky and the trade union leader Zopocky had been organizing workers' militia with the backing of the Central Trade Union Council where the CP commanded a substantial majority. The army too had been "injected" with a few radical elements. All these changes took place in broad daylight with the full knowledge of all parties, which merely reflected the new equilibrium of class forces.

The CP received a big jolt in November 1947. The Social Democratic Party Congress defeated its own pro-Communist President Fierlinger and installed a new leader who would have preferred to maintain a distance with the CP.

According to a recent article, a CP-conducted opinion poll in January 1948 revealed that CP votes might decline by 8% as against the May 1946 performance⁵. But this was never published. Moreover, it is

contradicted by trends in CP membership which rose from 11 lakhs in May 1946 to 13 lakhs in November 1947 and 20 lakhs in May 1948⁶. During this time the entire population of the country was less than 12 million.

The Final Act

The Revolution was finally triggered off in mid-February as Nosek dismissed 8 police commissioners. On February 17 non-Marxist Ministers tried to force Nosek to withdraw, but the latter persisted with the help of fellow Communist and all Social Democratic Ministers. The Cabinet meeting ended inconclusively: it did not support, as some people alleged, the non-Marxist Ministers. The latter resigned in protest in an obvious attempt to put the Marxists in the dock. Benes at first did not accept the resignation, hoping for a compromise, nor would the resigning Ministers budge. Many thought that a compromise was inevitable when Premier Gottwald would be forced to resign. But these calculations completely misfired. The CP cadres were put on alert on February 19 and two days later armed detachments of workers paraded the streets of Prague. Popular demonstrations in support of Premier Gottwald and the CP-Social Democrat alliance were held throughout the country. The masses were so enraged that none of the resigning Ministers dared address a single public meeting. On February 24 effective power was finally seized by the masses led by the CP and Fierlinger's faction of the Social Democrats. Radio and telephone stations, the Press agency and the ministries were occupied by them. Innumerable popular action committees were set up at different levels. All these were eventually legalized by the decrees of President Benes who finally shook off his bourgeois liberal inhibitions. Then on 25 February Benes accepted the resignation of the twelve non-Marxist Ministers and installed a new Cabinet again under the Premiership of Gottwald, which still included 4 members from Social Democrats and 4 from the Catholics and National Socialists. Jan Masaryk, an outstanding non-

Marxist democrat, became the Foreign Minister. A People's Democracy was thus born.

Conclusions

We have tried to be as objective as possible in telling our story. Some of the relatively minor details are still open to debate, but the main outlines are not. First, there can be no doubt that the Czech Revolution was not a palace coup as represented by most Western scholars, journalists and politicians. The masses "below" played a very active, if not determining, role in carrying out their goals. Secondly, and this follows from the first, this was a genuinely "indigenous" development in which the USSR had no overriding say. Even anti-Communist historians like Seton Watson and Brzezinski accept so much: during the critical days there were no Soviet troop manoeuvres on Czechoslovakia's borders and absolutely no plans for a Red Army invasion in case the Communists found themselves in a soup. And yet the same historians blow up the importance of Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Zorin's presence in Prague during the critical February days. He must have discussed the situation with Czech comrades and may well have given a green signal. But there is no scrap of evidence that he threatened the non-Marxist parties or leaders with dire consequences in case of non-compliance. Hence Western attempts to utilise the Czech case as a justification for their crusade against Soviet "imperialism" turns out to be one of the shoddiest hypocrisies of the Cold War era⁷.

If the Western myths can be exploded easily, it is much more difficult to draw unambiguous conclusions from the Czech experience that are relevant to the modern controversy among the Communists. First of all, the USSR as a Socialist State did ensure that when class struggle reached an acute stage in a non-socialist country, there were no foreign interventions. If, during the summer months of 1947, the USSR had quietly acquiesced in Czechoslovakia's acceptance of Marshall Aid or in Benes' proposal for a pact with France, the scales

might have been tipped irrevocably against the Czech Marxists. Of course, the Yalta Agreement had already allowed for a "90% Soviet influence" over Czechoslovakia but the Western Allies, ever since the death of Roosevelt, were busy upsetting the old agreements wherever they could. In any case, Stalin's courage appears all the greater for the USSR was at that time economically, politically as well as manpower-wise immensely weaker than the USA⁸. In our own times Fidel Castro has been asking the Soviet leaders for precisely this much: while the guerillas are fighting a heroic battle against a particularly obnoxious Latin American regime, don't try and bolster up that government with trade, aid and what not. One may quibble over whether or not *that* particular country is at the threshold of revolution. but the underlying logic can hardly be gainsaid. A revolutionary movement must always be conceded the benefit of the doubt.

Next we may turn to the more difficult question—the possibility of a parliamentary road to socialism. Frankly, the Czech case does not provide a vindication of either extreme. At the decisive moments the armed masses clinched the issue. If the masses were not armed, if the workers' militia had not come out into the streets, if, finally, the CP suffered from the virus of pacifism or strict constitutionalism the Czech Communists might have eventually found themselves in the same sort of straight-jacket as their Italian or French comrades. On the other hand, the ultimate victory was inconceivable (assuming again that the Soviets were in no mood for physical intervention) without long months of preparation both in and out of the parliamentary set-up. If the Communists had refused to participate in "bourgeois" elections and in the subsequent bourgeois-democratic or parliamentary type of government, the anti-socialist elements would have kept complete control over the Army and the administration. Under one pretext or another, the people's committees might have been

dissolved by fiat from above, the workers' militia could not have come into existence or survived for any length of time. If people like General Svoboda, the newly elected Czech President, did not exist among the upper echelons of the Army, if they had not counterbalanced the other Army officers with their typical bourgeois background, a civil war might have erupted with all its attendant uncertainties. Then the fact that the Marxist parties had a clear majority (wafer-thin, perhaps, but with no waverers) in Parliament was of immense importance in a country where the people, except for the war years, were accustomed to exercise their franchise regularly for over two decades. Without this parliamentary majority the resignation of the non-Marxist Ministers would have created a precarious constitutional situation¹ and the CP might have yielded to the formers' blackmailing tactics. One may then safely conclude that in the Czech case armed preparations and parliamentary forms of struggle were blended so harmoniously that these became mutually complementary rather than contradictory. Perhaps, it may be said, it was too ideal a situation with too many "specifics" to be of general and universal significance. But is it not true of all revolutions in all times?

NOTES

¹ *Le Monde Hedomadaire*, No. 1010/1968.

² N. Spulber, *The Economics of Communist Eastern Europe*, New York, 1957. J. M. Michal, *Central Planning in Czechoslovakia*, California, 1960.

³ H. Seton Watson, *The Pattern of Communist Revolution*, London, 1953.

⁴ *The Manchester Guardian*, 30 Oct. 1945.

⁵ See note 1.

⁶ Z. K. Brzezinski, *The Soviet Block: Unity and Conflict*, Cambridge, Mass., 1960.

⁷ D. Horowitz, *From Yalta to Vietnam*, Penguin Books, 1967.

⁸ I. Deutscher, *Ironies of History*, London, 1966.

On Napalm

M. S. PRABHAKAR

AMONG the many atrocities that are being committed by the United States against the people of Vietnam is the extensive use of napalm on vast tracts of land, ostensibly to burn up foliage or kill the 'Vietcong', but in actual fact to maim and kill the civilian population of Vietnam. What is this napalm? It is not just another ordinary weapon in the American arsenal. America, of course, has at its command all sorts of gruesome weapons in Vietnam, but even in the company of lazy-dogs, pineapple and guava bombs, napalm stands out. In the words of a U.S. peace activist, "It is a grotesque weapon made of jellied gasoline which, when dumped upon human beings or animal life, literally liquifies the flesh."^{*} It is a purely anti-personnel weapon (it can't be used to blast roads and bridges, for instance), and it is designed to *stick to the skin and burn*. It is not as if one gets a wound and bleeds; one is literally converted into liquid meat. There have been accounts of napalm victims whose whole skin got burnt and peeled off, *but yet who did not die*, and who had to sleep with the eyes covered with a shade because there were no eyelids. Thus Anthony Carthew of the *London Sun*: "I have also seen a napalm victim. This man had caught the full ferocity of the napalm bomb's fire. His body had been awash with the stuff. From his scalp to the soles of his feet, his skin was peeling as if from an obscene suntan. Yet he survived. That is, perhaps, the most horrible thing about napalm and white phosphorous: though the body is virtually drowned in flame, the victim tends to live." (Quoted in *The Minority of One*, June 1966). And if one is sceptical about this account because it appears in a Leftist journal, one may perhaps read the more genteel *Ladies Home Journal* (January 1967) which carried this account of the effects of napalm from Martha Gellhorn, the wellknown war correspondent: "We alone possess

FRONTIER

and freely use this weapon (napalm) in South Vietnam. Burns are deadly in relation to their depth and extent. If upward of 30% of the entire thickness of the skin is burned, the victim will die within 24 to 48 hours, unless he receives skilled, constant care. . . . Before I went to Saigon, I had heard and read that napalm melts the flesh, and I thought that's nonsense, because I can put a roast in the oven and the fat will melt but the meat stays there. Well, I went and saw these children burned by napalm, and it is absolutely true. The chemical reaction of this napalm does melt the flesh, and the flesh runs down their faces onto their chests and it sits there and grows there. . . . These children can't turn their heads, they were so thick with flesh. . . . And when gangrene sets in, they cut off their hands or fingers or their feet; they only thing they cannot cut off is their head." Pretty ?

From these accounts it is clear that napalm is in no sense a defensive weapon, not even a weapon of conventional offence. It is only extreme callousness that makes no distinction between any weapons, and tries to rationalize American use of napalm in Vietnam by piously maintaining that "all war is bad, all killing is bad". As was pointed out in a letter in the *New Statesman* some months ago, a man who uses the bayonet has a sense of being personally involved, and he cannot imagine himself as being without personal responsibility for his action. But a pilot flying a B-52 bomber miles and miles above the clouds can, with easy conscience, release the 500 pound bombs, and if deep below him, Hoang Tan Hung, a forty-five-year-old rice-grower and merchant from Quang Ngai province in South Vietnam (a witness at the Stockholm war crimes tribunal), is covered with flames, it is something the bombing crew is not even aware of.

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* Dick Krooth of Madison, Wisconsin in USA, whose research assistance in preparing this note the present author gratefully acknowledges.

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In the words of the "Emergency Report on the Manufacture and Uses of Napalm" compiled by the research staff of the Stanford Committee for Peace in Vietnam, napalm is a "highly inflammable substance made by adding thickeners to aviation gas. It has the appearance of bee's honey and the consistency of a sticky jelly. . . . designed and used as an incendiary bomb." (Quoted in *Ramparts*, August 1966). Formerly, ordinary gasoline was used as an incendiary: but this was found not quite suitable as it dispersed too rapidly once it was dropped. So an efficient thickening agent has been devised—viz, polysterene, which produces a more adhesive type of napalm. This new type of napalm, designated Napalm-B, consists of 50% polysterene, 25% gasoline, and 25% benzine. Reporting that a contract worth \$11 million had been entered into between the U.S. Airforce and the United Technology Centre (a division of the United Aircraft Corporation—the aircraft companies in the U.S. have been one of the major beneficiaries of the Vietnam war), *The New York Times* described this new type of napalm thus: "The contract called for a new and more efficient type of napalm. This would be made up of 50% polysterene and 25% each of benzine and

gasoline. Napalm is a petroleum product suspended in a jelly-like substance that causes it to stick and burn anything it touches." (*New York Times*, May 21, 1966). All the components are highly inflammable, but it is polysterene that gives napalm its grotesque distinction—the capacity to stick and burn. It is polysterene that is 'new' in this weapon, polysterene which is eminently suited to serve the functions of a thickener and adhesive. According to the *Oil, Paint and Drug Reporter* (January 17, 1966), "As a semi-solid, polysterene adheres readily to almost any surface on which napalm-B is spread."

Who Makes It

Who manufactures this monstrosity? And who manufactures polysterene, the chief component of napalm, the ingredient which gives napalm its gruesome quality? The chief manufacturer and supplier of napalm to the U. S. Defence department is Dow Chemical Company, a giant industrial corporation of the U.S. (ranked 50th among 500 of the largest industrial corporations of the U.S. in 1966, with sales of \$1,309,685,000 and a net income of \$121,691,000 in that year alone). Dow of course is a big industrial corporation with a variety of manufacturing interests, but napalm is not the least of its profitable manufactures. According to *Time* newsmagazine (3rd November 1967), Dow had supplied the U.S. Government with \$5,170,000 worth of napalm, presumably in 1966 alone.

Let us now take a close look at some figures regarding the total amount of napalm manufactured, and the amount of polysterene required for that manufacture. As was noted above, polysterene forms 50% of the final product—napalm. According to *Chemical and Engineering News* (18th July 1966), the total capacity of the U.S. to produce polysterene internally is 1.56 billion pounds. Of this, Dow itself produces 450 million pounds of polysterene a year at five different production locations within the U.S. (*Oil, Paint and Drug Reporter*, 9th May, 1966). Polysterene, of course, is a very versatile organic material and has

many other uses apart from being a component of napalm. It is widely used in the packaging industry, for instance, and Dow itself has a monopoly of the manufacture of Saran wrap, extensively used in the U.S. to pack meat. But it is clear that a substantial quantity of polysterene manufactured in the U.S. goes to the making of napalm. The question is, how much? And whether all the necessary polysterene is met by internal production? The last question might appear crazy, for after all the U.S. produces 1.56 billion pounds of polysterene, but it wouldn't seem so crazy if we bear in mind the fantastic demands of other consumer-oriented industries within the U.S. for polysterene, which has a multitude of uses.

The Chemical and Engineering News (18th July 1966) reported that 25 million pounds of polysterene a month will be used in the production of napalm (which means that roughly 50 million pounds of napalm is to be produced every month, or 600 million pounds every year. Only part of this is of course used in Vietnam, but vast stocks are kept ready for use elsewhere too; to help one ally to bomb an oil-tanker which has run aground and has polluted populated beaches; to help other allies to use it against peasant guerillas in Africa and Latin America). But that apart, it would mean that over 300 million pounds of polysterene (nearly 20% of the total production capacity in the U.S.) is diverted towards the manufacture of napalm. Of course, Dow itself could, theoretically meet all this requirement from its own production of polysterene (which is 450 million pounds annually, as was noted above); but it is unlikely that Dow would allow almost two-thirds of its polysterene production to be diverted to the manufacture of napalm. As was noted earlier, Dow has extremely diversified interests, and polysterene itself has many, many uses. Particularly in an industrially advanced nation, one could visualize almost limitless possibilities for such a versatile material like polysterene. So, it is unlikely that Dow would divert the major portion of its polysterene production towards the

manufacture of napalm, however profitable it might be, for the simple reason that the demands for polysterene from other industries would be too great to resist. But this does not mean that the needs of the U.S. Defence Department are not going to be met. And it is here that the worldwide interests of Dow attain some significance. Not all the business of Dow emanates from its smalltown mid-western headquarters at Midland, Michigan (population 27,779). Dow has subsidiaries all over the world, and almost everywhere these subsidiaries are found, some one or more of the components of napalm are produced. Thus, for example, Dow has a substantial interest in C.S.R.C.-Dow Ltd. Australia; the plant there manufactures polysterene and other chemicals. (*Moody's Industrial Manual*, June 1966) Plastichime S. A. operates a multi-million dollar plant at Rubecourt, near Paris, for the manufacture of polysterene and Saran wrap, and Dow Chemical A. G. (a subsidiary of Dow) controls part of it. (*Ibid*) Coming closer home, Dow has a 25% interest in a Bombay firm called Polychem Ltd. which too produces polysterene. (*Ibid*, P. 2726).

This firm was considered important enough to merit inclusion in the *Report of the Monopolies Enquiry Commission* (1965). It manufactures styrene and polysterene moulding powder, and it is the only company producing these commodities in the country (at least, it was, when the report of the MES came out). According to the *MECR*, the firm produced 5383.4 tonnes of polysterene moulding powder (i.e., over 12 million pounds), and only 57.4 tonnes of polysterene sheets in 1964. I have not been able to get the production figures of this firm for the years 1965-66 and 1966-67, but the country's production of polysterene for the calendar year 1965 was 13,512 metric tonnes and for 1966, it was 14,136 metric tonnes (*Journal of Industry and Trade*, October 1967). Since Polychem Ltd. did have a monopoly over the manufacture of polysterene as recently as 1965, it is likely that a large part of polysterene produced in

the country is still the product of this firm. The firm is also prospering; the company reports columns of both *Capital* (August 10, 1967, P. 259) and *Eastern Economist* (August 11, 1967, pp. 273-75) speak glowingly of the company's progress, with sales going up by 18% in the year ending 31st March 1967 over the previous year's sales (3.21 crores in 1965-66 to Rs. 3.79 crores in 1966-67). The gross assets of the company (in 1964) were estimated at less than five crores; which means that it is able to sell products worth more than 75% of its total assets every year—an astonishing turnover of the capital. But one curious fact emerges out of a study of the company's production figures: the two major items produced vary sharply in their total quantity of production. In 1964, it produced 5282.4 tonnes of polysterene moulding powder (which, as the name implies, is in powder form, and can be fabricated for any purposes, from making buckets to (perhaps) serving as a base for napalm), and only 57.4 tonnes of polysterene sheets (which, again as the name implies, is more in the nature of a semi-finished product, with versatile, but restricted uses, mainly for the manufacture of consumer articles, other kinds of plastics, as hardening agent &c). So one wonders what uses the remarkably large amount of polysterene moulding powder produced by the firm is put to. Of course, it is entirely possible that all the moulding powder is used internally for the manufacture of various secondary plastics; but the fact that Dow Chemical Company has a substantial share in the firm (25%) makes one suspicious. After all, Dow has always used all its subsidiaries to further its own interests (in this case, the interests of the U.S. Defence Department). It is also significant that the U.S. napalm production programme, according to *Oil, Paint and Drug Reporter* of January 17, 1966, has been thrown a little out of gear (and developments since then in Vietnam and in the U.S. do not suggest any great streamlining of the American war effort!) because of a shortage of the civilian production of polysterene. (Not to speak of a

very real shortage of benzine, which along with toluene, the U.S. imported in huge quantities, the figures for the first two months alone of 1966 being 281,060 gallons of the former, and 3,575,320 gallons of the latter (*Oil, Paint and Drug Reporter*, May 9, 1966. This journal also says that there is a shortage of polysterene, but does not say how the shortage is made up. Would it be too far-fetched to hazard a guess that a probable source would be the various subsidiaries of Dow Chemical Company, the major producer to polysterene in the U.S.? The links between the Indian firm and Dow, and the possibility of a surreptitious supply of polysterene produced in India, either directly to the U.S. or more probably, through the time-honoured method of export to a 'neutral' port for re-export to one of the napalm-producing plants of Dow, need to be investigated.

We learn with regret that copies of the second issue did not reach many readers. The fault is not ours. We are taking up the matter with the postal authorities.

Business Manager,
Frontier



The Press

Dissolution In U.P.

COMMENTATOR

LAST week the Uttar Pradesh Assembly, suspended by a Presidential proclamation on February 25, was dissolved on the recommendation of the State Governor that the people's mandate be sought afresh as a way out of the current political instability in the State. The mid-term poll may be held in November, though the Governor is reported to be in favour of February. A deputation of SVD leaders pleaded unsuccessfully with the President for a two-day postponement of the dissolution so that they might parade their supporters before the Governor to prove their majority. The Cabinet decision to dissolve the Assembly was taken before the meeting, though the announcement came later. Left parties in the Lok Sabha and the Jana Sangh staged a walk-out in protest against the dissolution without giving the SVD the time it had asked for.

The Centre is likely to refer to arbitration the disputes between the Congress Governments of Maharashtra and Mysore over the Narmada and Krishna waters. Both the State Governments are reported to be tired of protracted negotiations and have told the Centre that arbitration provides the only solution. The Union Home Minister has told the Congress party in Parliament that minority governments had no sanction of the electorate. This is reported to have encouraged the Congress legislators in Punjab who are keen to withdraw their support from the minority Government of Mr Lachhman Singh Gill. A move to form a Congress ministry in the State has been set afoot. The Union Law Ministry is of the opinion that any amendment of the law to disqualify a legislator on the ground of defection or floor-crossing would violate his fundamental right of freedom of speech, expression and association guaranteed by the Constitution. The Ministry suggests instead that the offer

and acceptance of monetary gratification or an office of profit as a consideration for political defections and floor-crossings should be declared as an offence. A 24-hour curfew was imposed on some areas of Allahabad town following recrudescence of communal trouble. Six people were killed.

Foreign correspondents of Indian papers have become busy over the Soviet Premier's visit to Pakistan. Reports from London, Washington, and Moscow suggest that President Ayub Khan will try to dissuade Mr Kosygin from giving further military assistance to India. More than one correspondent has reported that to strike a deal the Pakistan President may offer to revoke the agreement under which the U.S. has established an electronic intelligence base near Peshwar. The U.S. is seeking renewal of the lease for the base for another ten years. The search for a venue for Vietnam talks continues. The U.S. has rejected Phnom-Penh or Warsaw and North Vietnam has not agreed to Vientiane, Rangoon, Djakarta or New Delhi. The U.N. Secretary-General is reported to have suggested some possible sites to the U.S. and North Vietnam. Hanoi has accused the U.S. of delaying the proposed cease-fire talks; Mr Johnson has warned that the U.S. is growing impatient with the North Vietnamese propaganda over a site for preliminary peace talks. A wave of riots is sweeping over West Germany following an attempt to assassinate a left-wing student leader. The police used truncheons and water cannons to disperse student demonstrators in West Berlin. A news photographer was fatally wounded in the riots. Among the students arrested was the son of the West German Foreign Minister, Mr Willy Brandt.

The dissolution of the U.P. Assembly has been described by *The Hindustan Times* as an unavoidable step but the paper has questioned the procedure adopted. It says that the justification for dissolution advanced now was equally tenable seven weeks ago when the Governor thought that a mid-term poll was too serious a step to take immediately as it would in-

volve turmoil, expense and distraction. Having waited so long, not much harm would have been done if the SVD was given a chance to establish its claim that its majority was unaffected. If the Governor's calculations were correct—as they appear to have been—the SVD Government would not have survived long, but its defeat would have taken place within the sight of the State's elected representatives. The Governor, then, would not only have been right but would have been seen to be right if he either invited the Congress opposition to try to form a government or decided to recommend a dissolution. The procedure that has been followed has provided an opportunity to the SVD and the Governor's other critics to describe his advice as arbitrary. After the initial hesitation a few more weeks of uncertainty would not have been too heavy a price to pay for maintaining the best traditions of parliamentary democracy.

The support of *The Times of India* is unreserved, for it is obvious that when the Congress and the SVD each claims to enjoy a majority in the House there cannot be anything like a "reorientation of political affiliations" leading to the formation of a stable ministry. There is little doubt that the Congress bases its claim on the shifting loyalties of defectors. Its hopes of collecting a majority are pinned to the prospects of retaining the support of some 21 members who have crossed over from the other side. Its earlier adventure in this field when Mr C. B. Gupta, having obtained a majority with similar non-descript support, was not able to hold it together for even a month should have been a warning against a repetition of the experiment. At all events the Governor could not have ignored that warning. The Governor has to be something more than a calculating machine; he has to see not only whether a party claiming the right to form a ministry has a majority now but also whether it will be able to hold it for a reasonable length of time. From that point of view he had really no choice. Neither the Congress nor the SVD can disguise the fact that a

handful of defectors will be in a position to hold them both to ransom.

Patriot says the correct thing for the Governor would have been in the first instance to accept the advice given by Mr Charan Singh to dissolve the Assembly. There is every reason for the people to believe that he and the Central Government rejected the advice because the Congress in U.P. does not have the necessary self-confidence to assume that a mid-term election would be advantageous to it. Secondly, in view of the dissensions in the SVD, Mr. C. B. Gupta had convinced himself that given time he would be able to arrange for a sufficient number of defections and fabricate a majority. If the Governor and the Central Government have now decided to risk a general election it is not because the Congress has grown more self-confident. It is, on the other hand, an admission that whatever Mr C. B. Gupta and other leaders of the party may do they are not likely to be able to gather around themselves a large enough majority. The legislature was suspended to give Mr Gupta the opportunity he demanded. When it was found that he could not make use of the opportunity, dissolution of the Assembly has been resorted to in despair. This does not redound to the dignity or the constitutional good sense of the Central Government or its agent in Lucknow.

"Unrealism"

The decision of the West Bengal PSP to quit the United Front and the vacillation of the BKD over this question have been matters of comment for most newspapers. Hitting out at the BKD for its "unrealism" *The Statesman* says that at the national level the party harbours ambitions which are unrelated to its strength; at the West Bengal level it follows tactics which can do no good either to its own or to the political future of the State. Asking Mr Ajoy Mukherjee and his associates to avoid a game of hide and seek somewhere between the UF and a "third force" the paper says that Mr Mukherjee is adding little to his options or to his reputation for decisiveness by his ambiguous behaviour.

There may be little to choose between his leaving the UF and remaining with it, but dithering alternately between the two courses will make him an even smaller man than he has already become on account of his vacillations last autumn. Mr Mukherjee may believe that by calculated ambiguity he will be able to bargain for the allotment of a greater number of constituencies to his party. But the BKD's position in the UF and influence upon the politics of the State will not depend so much on the nominations it can wangle for itself but upon the quality of leadership it is able to display. If it was reduced to pathetic dependence upon the Communists in the UF Government while it lasted, the reason was not that it was small in numbers but that it was poor in leadership; its present tactics show that it has not become richer.

The Hindustan Times has chosen the West Bengal PSP's decision to drop out of the UF as an occasion to plead for an alliance of all non-Communist parties, including the Congress. It says that at Raigunj Mr H. V. Kamath was at pains to develop the theme of the PSP's political antagonism to both the Communist parties and the Congress. This would mean that he is thinking in terms of a third front for the mid-term elections. In effect such a third front will only take away the votes from the Congress. It is more logical for the PSP to come to an understanding with all nationalist and democratic parties, including the Congress. The break-up of the UF will not by itself solve the long-term question of political stability in West Bengal. The projected new alliance of non-Communist and non-Congress parties is unlikely to muster sufficient organisation or enthusiasm. Only if the present moves lead to a broad coalition of all non-Communist elements, including the Congress, can it provide the people of West Bengal with a viable and adequate political alternative. Mr Kamath, Mr. P. C. Sen, Mr Ashutosh Ghosh and others must realise that one positive step in this direction will be more effective than all the rhetoric they have engaged in so far.

Book Review

CHINA: THE PEOPLE'S MIDDLE KINGDOM AND THE U.S.A.

By John K. Fairbank.

Harvard University Press. Price \$3.95

ONE of the striking phenomena in the publishing world of postwar America, particularly after the birth of Communist China, has been the sprouting of China experts like bamboo shoots after the rains. This growing pack of China-watchers have caused almost a glut in books on China. Most of them have served to increase misunderstanding and confusion if not fear and hatred. A very few of them have undertaken serious research in Chinese history and politics. Prof Fairbank is the doyen of these Old China hands. His *The United States and China, Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast, and East Asia* with two other co-authors are serious contributions to Chinese history, not withstanding his bias.

The present volume is a collection of articles published between 1960 and 1966. They have been grouped, according to theme, in three sections. The thesis forwarded in the first section has been well summarised in the title of one of the articles 'A Nation Imprisoned by Her History'. This game of comparing modern China with the old and looking, what is called, through the eyes of history has been a favourite pastime of the historians. They often go very dangerously close to the theory of history repeating itself. Though Prof Fairbank admits that "the content of the new orthodoxy of Communist China" is a far cry indeed from the comparatively static doctrines of Confucian self-discipline with an immutable social order (p. 42), he nevertheless finds much similarity between the dynastic and party rule. "The combination of the military, the civil administration and the Communist Party makes a tripod comparable to the tripod of the military, the civil bureaucracy and the sensorate under the dynastic regimes". (p. 26) But the mass organizations, he adds, now form a fourth leg. One wonders if this reliance on the masses

does not altogether change the basis of administration, making the analogy meaningless. However no people have been more history-conscious than the Chinese and even the staunchest of the Leninists will find it hard to quarrel with Prof Fairbank when he says that China's present policy comes out of her history and "not just from Lenin's book."

Prof Fairbank attempts in the second section a sort of compromise formula about Taiwan. It would have been best, no doubt, if China could be freed of the Communist scourge. But since Chairman Mao is not likely to oblige him, he has to remain content with the tiny 'free world' of Taiwan. "As a simple moral issue", he says, "we cannot abandon thirteen million Taiwan Chinese to the lower living standard, reprisals and a grinding process which they would inevitably suffer under Chinese Communism" (p. 56). In another place, however, he states with much candour the reason why the USA needs Taiwan. "We need access to a Chinese area that is non-Communist, where intelligence work, military programs, language training and academic research can all be carried on" (p. 74). Which of these factors weighs more on U.S. policy is a question not very difficult to answer.

Prof Fairbank would like to recognize the reality of Communist China and at the same time keep the hold on Taiwan. This lands him in a dilemma. For, neither Mao nor Chiang would have 'Two Chinas'. So his prescription is no second China in Taiwan but an 'autonomous' Taiwan with 'dual representation' at the U.N. together with Communist China—like Outer Mongolia. This 'autonomy' however, should be backed by the Seventh Fleet. This scheme forms the first step in his package programme for bringing China within the fold of civilisation. "(1) Sooner or later, human survival will require an effective arms-control agreement with Soviet Russia, which (2) will require Peking's adherence, which (3) will require Peking's admission to the international order of United Nations, which (4) will require Taiwan's being acknowledged an in-

dependent State...." (p. 54). The plan as such sounds perfectly alright except, of course, the solution—the dubious autonomy for Taiwan.

One of the arguments justifying the scheme of 'autonomy' is ingenuous. "While the people in Taiwan are Chinese, so are most of the people of Singapore and even of Hongkong. The Chinese race is numerous and need not be all under one roof...." (p. 70) What he conveniently forgets to mention is that Taiwan is not just another place inhabited by the Chinese people but it has been since A.D. 607 a Chinese province. The Chinese suzerainty over Taiwan has been recognized by his Government in, to mention only one, the Cairo Declaration of 1943. If his argument is valid, what about erecting an independent state of Florida?

Policy of Containment

In the third section Prof Fairbank concerns himself with the problem 'How to Deal with the Chinese Revolution'. He thinks that the present policy of "containment is only half a policy". It should be balanced, dialectically, "by non containment", that is a programme of peaceful intercourse. He knows that the Chinese are not amenable to "pure sweetness and light" and so suggests that the military containment should be combined with "a more sophisticated diplomatic program to undermine China's militancy by getting her more involved in formal international contact of all kinds and on every level." (p. 129). Whether the Chinese will lend themselves to the horse-play is a different matter, but the proposal is sufficient to upset a good number of senators.

His writing at some places seems to be an essay in shocked innocence. He writes, "We are generally conscious of having long befriended China and recently been kicked in the teeth for it." Yet he must know better than many people what wrong his Government has done to the Chinese people since the days of 'hitch-hiking imperialism'. They spent six billion dollars just to prop up the oppressive Kuomintang regime.

His articles also contain contradic-

tory statements and sentiments. On page 69 he defines Chinese totalitarianism as "a system based somewhat less on faith, hope and charity than on organized fear, suspicion and hatred." On page 27 he speaks of Communist dependence on the morale of the party members and cadres and Chinese people as a whole. "Mao's government is effective through moral suasion and manipulation." Or on page 41, "every village now participates in the political life that was formally reserved for the ruling class. Peasant passivity has given way to activism by all citizens." Are these contradictions the result of absentmindedness or is he in two minds?

The present volume though providing much food for thought, leaves one unsatisfied. Modern China cannot possibly be adequately understood or explained while refusing to understand Marxism.

C. PRASAD

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Five Artists

BY AN ART CRITIC

PARITOSH Sen, Prabhas Sen, Sarbari Roy Chowdhury, Bijon Chowdhury and Mohim Roodro are having an exhibition of paintings and sculpture at the Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Southern Avenue, Calcutta. It is an interesting exhibition where all the exhibitors painstakingly strive towards artistic fulfilment. The display, more close to that of a gallery than a usual exhibition, is tasteful.

Paritosh Sen has changed and matured considerably since his last solo exhibition, where he appeared to be groping for form without quite being able to find it. Here he has something definite to say and he makes his statement in a language unfettered by doubt. His "Triptych", for example, is free and forceful, and he proudly proclaims his belief that the finer elements in man cannot be subdued or subjugated. All his works here are moving.

Prabhas Sen, whose sculpture is a meaningful document on everyday life, is intense and lyrical without being sugary. "The Autocrat", reminiscent of the King in *Red Oleanders*, has the proud stance of the tyrant. The piece is the sculptor's expression of rebellion against oppression. His "Towards Sun" has freedom and plasticity, and is equally well seen from any angle.

Bijon Chowdhury, who has a number of drawings and paintings, tells of trivial happenings of great importance. His drawings are charged with emotion, and his spontaneous lines have a vibrating appeal. The imagery of his paintings, like in "Illusion and Reality", tells of a mature and emotionally integrated mind. His "Black Christ" has sympathy written all over.

Sarbari Roy Chowdhury's sculpture, irrespective of its size, has a quality that one associates with bigness, and this, despite the fact that most of his exhibits are quite small. They are

balanced in form, alive in texture and articulate in emotional content.

Mohim Roodro, in his paintings, favours the abstract form. They disclose a thoughtful mind that has put in a lot of hard work to arrive at its aesthetic destination. The forms and colours are well organised and his conception is potent. His drawings show that he has a definite objective and prove him to be a good draughtsman.

The exhibition will remain open up to May 1, excluding Tuesdays.

A Deft Debutante

Usha Karmerkar's first solo exhibition at the South Gallery of the Academy of Fine Arts had 14 exhibits, all oils.

This artist is not circumscribed by any rigid norm. Instead, she gives full rein to her artistic manifestation, adapting her style to suit the subject. The result is a pleasant diversity in her work, both in form and in theme. It is obvious that she has taken pains to give expression to her feelings, through line and colour, without losing her spontaneity. In fact, some of her exhibits had all the charm and naivete of primitive painting.

She chooses her colours with discretion and coordinates her forms with felicity. A typical example was "Stellar Movement", in which a minimum of colour has been used and space effectively divided. "Cosmology" was a systematized and orderly canvas. "Townscape No. 2" had a regulated abandon which was very pleasant. The composition of "Moored Boats" was powerful.

Mrs Karmerkar handles oil colour with deftness.

Oils Again

Sajal Roy showed 17 oil colours at his recent exhibition at the Birla Academy of Art and Culture. They could be divided into two groups, one being more formal than the other. Curiously enough, what appeared to belong to the earlier period belonged in fact, to the artist's later phase. A refreshing fact about Mr Roy is that although he has imagination, his feet are, at the same time, planted firmly

FRONTIER

on the ground, and he is alive to the pains and passions of everyday life. He is forthright in his statements and crisp in his phrases. At times there is, admittedly, an element of harshness, but that can probably be explained by the impassioned nature of expression. On the other hand, there was at least one canvas that we thought was rather sentimental. This was "The Red Cactus". Among the pictures that we liked most were "Melancholy Dream". It is simple, powerful and integrated.

The Gallery Mona Lisa, Lansdowne Road, recently saw an exhibition of graphic designs by Nanda Kundu. These have been done in a technique which has been developed by the artist. He does not use the traditional surfaces (like wood, linoleum or copper-plate) but the surfaces of water for transference of the designs on to paper. Since they cannot be duplicated, water surface being what it is, he calls them, presumably, monoprints. Some of the exhibits form interesting patterns but how much of it is left to chance and how far the credit goes to the artist, is a matter that can be debated.

Letters

Reactions

I have just finished reading *Frontier*. I was awaiting it with great expectations. It is fine but a little tame. What are you worrying about—the establishment, old and new, or the financiers! Charlatanism in science and accommodation in politics are to be despised. Write when you must. Do whatever you want to do, but with a singleness of purpose. I am not, however, ruling out caution, tactics, suggestiveness.

Subodh Rai Choudhury
Calcutta

When one launches a paper one is guided by a particular social aim and considers the political character of the readership for which it is meant. As such, its ways and art of writing, choice of subjects and its total integral image would be limited by these factors. But only initially. Because

the task of all politico-cultural papers is to carry its readership towards maturity, to remould them, so to say, so that they can transform themselves into a 'real' force in the camp of progress. It is not enough to expose in a vaguely delightful way the evils of the present, (though this task is certainly not to be minimised). Telling the real truth in a pleasant way is also an art which is commendable under particular circumstances. But side by side with exposure of the filth one must strike a note of unmistakable optimism, must hint at the ways to clear that age-old fifth. That is exactly what the Gorkovian literature, including its publicist articles, did on the eve of the October storm. There is no place for pessimism or cynicism in your *Frontier*. But unfortunately the article on Gorky ends with a pessimistic conclusion, quite uncalculated. Even then, I appreciate the author's realisation that "truth now seems in danger of being drowned in hire purchase happiness and promises of high consumption benefit even in the socialist sector of the world".

The editorail, 'Pause in Vietnam?' serves the purpose it is written for, because it emphasises the inevitable conclusion that "all men and arms that dollar can buy cannot win the war", as shown in Korea and Cuba. Also Johnson's 'pause' can well be a preparation for new, fiercer attacks for which regrouping of his battered forces is no less necessary than new reserves. And you have very rightly pointed out that the basic principled stand of the DRV has not been budged from an inch. A tactical compromise without principles makes one lose the final perspective and thus the final strategic objective. Your editorial has dealt with these problems and correctly pointed to the fact for your over-enthusiastic and impatient readers that the time for another Dien Bieu Phu has not yet arrived.

Charan Gupta's (Calcutta Diary) style is captivating and his opinions are candid. I think most of your readers read and relish his columns. But sometimes he seems to betray a lack of political grounding. For instance, his apprehension about a pos-

sible breach in the CPM. Splits in the ranks of revolutionary parties are bad, but not always. Sometimes a split helps to hasten the process of maturity. So splits should be analysed before hailing or condemning them. When it is a question of a rotting stagnant situation created by a leadership which for various reasons is incapable of heading the hard struggle, and wants to mark time on the plea of "immature objective situation", I think a split is welcome just as we welcomed the splitting of the CPI after 1962.

I would like you to open a forum on Latin America, Africa and Asia about which our people know practically nothing.

A READER
Calcutta

Whoever wants to help the vacillating must stop vacillating himself. That is my immediate reaction on reading your first article 'With no Regrets' (April 20). You still seem to cherish illusions about the scope and possibility of the United Front Government, but I have none. Though unlike the majority of the left-minded middle-class I had no hopes of far-reaching reforms through the instrumentality of the United Front Ministry, I nevertheless believed that it was possible to utilise the policy of office acceptance to the fullest extent and advance the cause of Indian Socialism. I believed that through office acceptance the United Front Ministry would be able to demonstrate to the people of India from their own administrative experience that there was little scope for reform and relief within the limits of the Constitution, with the existing class relations and bureaucratic State machine remaining as they are. The experience would prepare the Communists and the countrymen at large psychologically for the final and determined assault on the citadel of reaction both in the city and countryside. But to my utter disappointment I found that the Communists in particular completely gave way, turned the party of revolution into a glorified Labour Party and acquiesced in everything Ajoy Mukherjee and Prafulla Ghosh

did. To take one example, Jyoti Basu and Konar refused to institute a judicial enquiry into the police firing at Naxalbari, although in the election manifesto they unequivocally promised "Legal Provision for Judicial Enquiry in all cases of police firing and complaints about atrocities" (Page-44). Right under the nose of the redoubtable Labour Minister, Subodh Banerjee, the only "MARXIST", thousands of workers were rendered jobless. And last but not least there was that unprecedented rice swindle. Never before was the economic crisis so acute, compulsion of economic so telling and what is more, people so helpless. Who could foresee that Engels would be so prophetically correct when he warned Turati in a letter dated January 26, 1894 that participation by the Communist in a Republican Government would completely paralyse the revolutionary action of the working class they were supposed to represent.

There was a universal systematic and persistent sabotage of every kind of control, supervision and of all government attempts to institute them. And one must be incredibly naive not to understand, one must be an utter hypocrite to pretend not to understand where this sabotage came from and by what means it was being carried on. For this sabotage by the bankers, capitalists and jotedars, this *frustration* of every kind of control was being adapted to the existence of 'progressive united front government' institutions. The capitalist and jotedars have realised perfectly the truth which all believers in Marxism recognise in word, but which Ranadives and Rajeswar Raos tried to forget as soon as their friends secured jobs as ministers.

To my utter regret I now find that instead of clarifying the minds of the

workers, instead of explaining to the masses the incompatibility of relief and present-day capitalism they are befogging them with the promise of 'modest relief' instead of preaching the inevitability of revolution and instead of asking people to be bold and courageous, they are instilling fear by citing the example of the Indonesian massacre, instead of freeing the masses from bourgeois influence, they are strengthening that influence. They now find themselves in the unenviable position of the apologists of bourgeois rule.

It is time to reconsider our position and start afresh. Whoever speaks now of the United Front in the old way is behind the times. The conception of united front changes with time and so does not get us a step further. In my opinion what should be said is this: the toiling masses too require a united front for the seizure of political power, but it serves them as a means. But if we want to make the united front an end in itself we are sure to be consigned to the dustbin of history. We are told: the masses have grown used to the name, the masses have come to love 'their' United Front. And that the Congress would come back. But it is a false alternative and an argument that disregards the desirability, possibility and inevitability of the genuine and third alternative, the tasks of the immediate morrow in the revolution. It is an argument of routine, an argument of inertia. But we are out to rebuild India, rebuild the world.

The left democratic obligations of the working class of India are now coming to the forefront with particular force.

Only the lazy do not swear by left-

ism and socialism these days. All the more urgently, therefore, does it become the duty of the working class, peasantry and the revolutionary intelligentsia to draw a clear, precise and definite distinction between leftism in deed and leftism in words.

Probodh Chandra Dutta
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