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HUNTING WITH THE HOUND

WHAT happened in the College Street area last week is ominous. The background to the story, as it could be pieced together from newspaper reports : the Calcutta University Students Union, whose legitimacy is in dispute, had taken out Rs. 6,000 from the union funds to spend on some tamasha connected with the freshers; the Naxalites, their demand for a ban on the union and refund of the money having failed, had gheraoed the Vice-Chancellor for 16 hours on March 5. He was rescued by teachers and outsiders after a scuffle in which, students said, they were manhandled. The Vice-Chancellor (the same V. C. was gheraoed by students when McNamara came to town) declared that though the students were getting out of hand, he had no intention to call in the police but the public, the law-abiding public, should not stand by but do something to check the trouble-mongers—a policy which had been proclaimed earlier at the Maidan rally of March 9 by the Home Minister. The Vice-Chancellor spoke in the voice of Mr Panampali Govinda Menon, the Union Law Minister who is in the habit of urging fellow Keralans to defend themselves tooth and nail against the Communist rowdies.

In view of this provocative call, what followed on March 13 should have been foreseen. But the Naxalites do not yet know or care to know when to take one step back. They wanted the Vice-Chancellor and the teachers to apologise for their "rough behaviour" when he was being rescued on the day of the first gherao. It is reported that the teachers were prepared, on March 13, during the second gherao, to express regret for the incident and that the Naxalites at first were prepared to accept the regret. But then they insisted that the Vice-Chancellor must condemn the withdrawal of Rs. 6,000 by the CUSU forthwith and ban the union. Which the V. C. said he would not or could not do—he had asked the representatives of the different unions to meet him on March 14 to thrash out the issues. As the rebels wanted an immediate ban, the gherao continued. The first attempt to break it by other students failed. Then one saw the spectacle of numerous UF volunteers, many of them wearing red scarves and brandishing sticks, and students marching to Darbhanga Building in the evening to rescue the revered Vice-Chancellor. The outnumbered Naxalites tried to leave after a brief skirmish but their escape route to the "notorious" Hindu Hostel was barred; they took another direction.

During the retreat any number of crackers—or bombs—were used by both sides; a non-student belonging to the youth wing of the CPI(M) was killed. On Friday 14, at the condolence meeting, nine UF Ministers, declaring a crusade against the Naxalites, said the public must “isolate and totally crush” them. For this even rifles might be issued, said one Minister.

The witch hunt was almost instantaneous. Groups of young men with knives, sticks, and crackers, moved about, beating up Naxalites. They attacked the Hindu Hostel, a stronghold of the Naxalites, seven times, broke into the Coffee House, a co-operative undertaking, and ransacked everything. Even the bearers were not spared. A raid on Presidency College was attempted. The office of a Naxalite fortnightly was attacked. This seems the beginning of an intermittent, disgraceful campaign and it is sickening beyond words that UF Ministers should have encouraged it.

Couldn't the Vice-Chancellor avoid the trouble right at the beginning when a protest was lodged with him? Rs. 6,000 is a pretty good sum of money and it is not for burning by a union whose legality is in question. He is reported to have assured the Naxalites at first and then backed out. But it is also time the Naxalite students realised how far they can go. Couldn't they have waited until March 14 when the representatives of all the diverse unions were due to consider the character of the Calcutta University Students Union and the withdrawal of the sum of money? If the representatives of the unions had condoned the action of the CUSU, they would have exposed themselves. But instead of waiting, the Naxalites continued the gherao and are reported to have ransacked the office of the Vice-Chancellor. Is there any particular Maoist virtue in getting extremely isolated and damned? Do the Naxalites not know that, with the sweeping victory of the UF, a cultural revolution has overtaken the Calcutta Press which now swears by the UF

and ascribes any unpleasant thing happening under the sun to the extremists?

And why should the Naxalites be so addicted to gherao? Let us not mince words—there is something vulgar about this phenomenon. Strike—and the knowledge when not to strike—is a Marxist weapon. Gherao is a petty-bourgeois gimmick. It is a sort of Gandhian satyagraha in reverse, with a vengeance. A satyagrahi was supposed to inconvenience himself to bring about a change of heart in the opponent; a gheraoist, on the other hand, tries to inflict the maximum physical, not moral, inconvenience on the antagonist while, perhaps, taking it easy himself—he can take his turn in the crowd by rotation. And let us not forget that this loud, ostentatious tactic of gherao, with its eye on instant victory, was the favourite practice during the 1967 UF regime and that it had little effect. Of course gherao by a constituent unit of the UF is still alright. It is in the natural order of things that the CPI or the CPI(M) or the SUC will try to embarrass one another on labour and other fronts by gheraos on a limited scale. This is all part of the United Front game. However, outsiders must beware and behave. If they don't, they will not only be branded as Congress agents, whatever their cause may be, but also beaten up.

And what about leaders who order a witch hunt and those who respond to the call, what about those new disciplinarians who went all out to break the gherao of the Vice-Chancellor in a rare display of devotion? Well, the UF has taken over the real estate of West Bengal for five years and there must be stability, good manners, decency where they don't want things to be disturbed. Contrary to expectations in some quarters that a sort of confrontation is imminent with those who had exploited and damned West Bengal for umpteen years, are we to have a mobilisation against the minority left? Was it for this that the peasants, the workers and the unaffluent middle-class voted for the United Front?

From the beginning the right-wing Democratic Action Committee had been acting according to a plan under which the issues of full regional autonomy for East Pakistan, the break-up of the one unit in West Pakistan and representation in the Federal Parliament on the population basis were to be shelved at the Round Table Conference. They had kept quiet about their intentions and were in a hurry to attend the RTC, but the refusal of Mr Bhutto and Maulana Bhashani, backed by tremendous student power, had checked them. The release of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a notable victory for the left opposition, however, paved the way. The students said they supported the 6-point programme of the Awami League and the Sheikh backed the 11-point programme of the Students' Action Committee which had already received the support of the Maulana.

All this unity, however, was frustrated at the RTC by the opposition of right-wing leaders like Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, Mian Mumtaz Daultana, Choudhry Mohammed Ali, Maulana Maudoodi of the fanatical Jamaat-i-Islami and others. A federal parliamentary system and direct elections on adult franchise were all they cared for; break-up of the one unit and regional autonomy for East Pakistan were a little too much for these westerners.

The DAC has now dissolved itself. Air Marshal Ashgar Khan, a man of integrity whose politics is still shrouded in mystery, has formed a Justice Party. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman broke away from the DAC before it was dissolved—he should have been wiser before—and has decided to carry on the fight by constitutional means. In the meantime he will submit his proposals to President Ayub. Maulana Bhashani has called an all-party meeting for March 30 to discuss the constitutional issues. On the other hand, there are people in Pakistan who still look forward to a sort of Nasakom—a union of the bureaucratic-military complex, Islamic parties and nationa-

list forces. These are the people who demand a "national" Government in which Ayub Khan too will have his place.

The fanatics are still strong in West Pakistan where the countryside is dominated by big landlords who have never had it so good. Their class solidarity with the ruling clique is intimate and warm. It is their spokesmen who have raised an outcry against the menace of socialism; they are spreading rumours about the Koran being burnt by leftist students, and provoking clashes with leftist demonstrators. "Silence the tongue that utters the word 'socialism'"—exhorted Maulana Maudoodi and Bhasani was assaulted near Multan.

In East Pakistan, the picture is different. The hold of the landlords is not so strong there after the departure of the Hindu zamindars. The province is being ruled by non-Bengalis and puffed-up, petty basic democrats of the native variety. The feeling against Punjabi domination is overbearing. But in East Pakistan too the right-wing is becoming active. A few days ago students of the Jamaat-i-Islami stormed newspaper offices and declared that they would give no quarter to the socialists, in particular, to the Bhashani group of the National Awami Party. And it is a pity that their campaign against Maulana Bhashani has gained some indirect support from the so-called leftists who see in every violent mass upsurge the red herring of adventurism and extremism.

The significance of the campaign by the rightists may be minimised at the moment, but it is a danger, a big potential danger. The army is not snoring. The Nabobs of Rawalpindi have not written everything off. Plans are being hatched to exploit the division in opposition ranks and at the required moment there may be a massive, ruthless crackdown on the radical forces. Troops, now to be reinforced, have killed scores of people in East Pakistan—where some scum has come to the surface, as is usual during any upsurge—and martial law is said to be imminent. The pincers of the army and the fanatical Islamic elements may already be moving in the dark. With

two super-powers favouring the status quo and the third keeping quiet, the army and the Islamic advocates may

be dreaming of doing an Indonesia. It is to be hoped that the radical left in Pakistan is aware of this danger.

CPI And Kulaks

We do not propose to mince any words. It was entirely predictable that members of the Swatantra Party and the Jana Sangh will vigorously object to the idea of an agricultural wealth tax, and to the levies on fertilisers and power-driven pumps. It was also in order that the Congress, composed as it is of individuals of diverse persuasions and ideologies, will be split down the middle over the proposals. What one was not prepared for was the altogether unprincipled, altogether opportunist line the Communist Party of India has taken in regard to the suggested levies. After a silence which extended for the better part of a week, the party finally came out with a statement offering lukewarm support to the cause of the agricultural wealth tax. But there is a catch in the support. The CPI Central Executive Committee is prepared to cooperate with the Government to see through the necessary legislation, but it has first to be satisfied on one score. While Mr Morarji Desai has proposed the limit of exemption from the purview of the tax to be at the level of Rs one lakh the CPI wants this to be raised to as high as Rs. three lakhs. It is only when this diktat is obeyed that the party will find it possible to support the proposal for taxing the wealth of the rural rich.

The bona fides of Mr Morarji Desai need scarcely detain us. What is in question is the bona fides of a party which calls itself the Communist Party of India. Roughly a decade ago, a prominent lady in the CPI, now installed as Minister in a certain State Government, had raised a similar rumpus over the proposal to have a tax on urban property, and fought hard to raise the limit of exemption for *that* tax. But at least on that occasion the lady was making her individual protest; the present instance is one of collective clamour—the party as a whole—

and officially—wants to protect those sections of the agricultural community who have come to amass wealth amounting to between Rs. one lakh and three lakhs. The motivation for such an extraordinary demand is not at all difficult to seek either. The party must have close links with elements in the countryside whose assets touch this magic region, and blood is proving thicker than ideology.

This is the saddest part of the story. It does not really matter by which name you call a party, most parties are led—and have their destinies controlled—by a handful of people who come from the same thin stratum of society. Talk of getting de-classed through sustained political education is so much Marxist jargon, scarcely more than that. In the Indian milieu, it is not individuals who, despite their class background, imbibe the principles of proletarian brotherhood; it is the other way round—it is the parties of the left which have their attitudes modulated by the views of the select few who manage to climb to their leadership.

Still, one would have hoped that at least a certain decorum will be observed and there will be no overt expression of class bias in the public pronouncements of these parties. Obviously, decorum is for the birds, and we witness the curious phenomenon of Mr Morarji Desai proposing a tax on the rural gentry to be firmly opposed by the so-called Communist Party of India. Pressure for forcing the withdrawal of the proposals is gaining momentum, and by the time we appear in print, the "poor" people in the wealth bracket of between one lakh and three lakhs of rupees may already have won their battle. The CPI, God bless its proletarian soul, could then march on to still more famous victories.

Invited To Bomb

Cambodia's unpredictable Prince Sihanouk is at last behaving in a manner already predicted. The 10th March issue of *Newsweek* (printed apparently on or before 5th) reported in its periscope column that the Prince "is tacitly permitting U.S. air raids" on some Cambodian provinces, supposedly "North Vietnamese and Vietcong bases". On March 6, the day the U.S. Defence Secretary arrived in Saigon, the Prince declared over Radio Cambodia that units of North Vietnamese and Vietcong troops were encamped in the Rattanakiri and Mondulakiri provinces and indicated that he would not mind if American planes bombed them. He also said he had prepared a map (for the benefit of American pilots) giving exact locations of Vietcong bases. The Prince has so long stubbornly rejected U.S. allegations of a Vietcong sanctuary in Cambodia and he was confirmed by the International Control Commission in this regard. How to explain this drastic change? It passes beyond comprehension why the Vietcong, who could deal blow after blow at the Americans over the last eight years without a Cambodian sanctuary, should now choose to settle down in Cambodia. But viewed in the context of the changing Cambodian scene Sihanouk's latest stand does not look so surprising.

Ever since the outbreak of a peasant revolt in April 1967 in Cambodia's western, north-eastern and eastern provinces Sihanouk has been growing cool towards China and Vietnam. Cambodian peasants, the Prince thinks, are very fond of him; the real villain of the piece is to be found among the Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai communists. With a growing peasant trouble on his hand Sihanouk is haunted by the prospect of being surrounded by a communist Asia. In November last he told the Americans, "You are an imperialist force, but you are welcome to stay in South-East Asia." Now he is even welcoming them to bomb his own country!

That the Prince was moving in this

direction could be seen in the 'reasonableness' he has lately been showing to the U.S. Starting from his permission to the Americans to make "short incursions" into Cambodia in December 1967 to his prompt release of American soldiers and pilots intruding inside the country, the Prince has given ample demonstration of his changed attitude to the U.S. It is not just a coincidence that the provinces that are offered for American bombing happen to be areas of guerilla activities conducted by the Red Khmer. The Prince, however, has a clear con-

science: the peasants who take up arms against the government of their Prince are not Cambodians but Vietcong and, if not so, at least disloyal Cambodians, and in either case deserve to be bombed. As early as February last year Sihanouk warned that a Cambodian "Vietminh" movement was trying to gain control of areas in his country. "The choice", he said, "is dramatic. One must either allow these zones to develop, or else bomb them as in the case of zones controlled by the Pathet Lao in Laos." After a year he has made his choice.

All-India Services

A report on the all-India civil services has raised an alarm over the fact that first class graduates are now indifferent to these once-coveted jobs. Although there has been no survey to date to prove that third class graduates make inferior administrators, it does not require an in-depth study to say that tact and a capacity for quick decision have nothing to do with the art of getting a first class degree. But the assumption has been taken so long for granted and is implicit in the very method of recruitment which has a strong bias towards written tests.

It is true that the number of first class graduates which is increasing over the years has not been reflected in the number of those sitting for the UPSC examinations. The reason, overlooked by the report makers, is obvious. The number has increased in science faculties, the students of which were never encouraged to join the civil services which do not require specialised knowledge in physics, chemistry or such other subjects. Even if some engineers or nuclear physicists, allured by the glamour of the IAS and the IFS, chose to join these, they had to face a very hostile interview board. Others would consider technical services financially more rewarding.

But it is not true that private firms offer higher emoluments to humanities graduates. A new recruit to the IAS gets more than Rs. 500 in the first

year and within three years more than Rs. 1200. Very few firms offer such high salaries to their managers. And so recommendations of the report makers to revise the all-India services pay scales, to allow quicker and bigger increments and other inducements, appear not only fortuitous but in fact expose their own vested interests. For people who make such reports, and follow these up by framing cases and proposals and carry them through the Home Ministry are the members or parasites of these services themselves.

It is however difficult to imagine why students judged good by universities feel shy about the all-India services, specially when unemployment is so acute. The bureaucracy is bound to become more powerful and glamorous as ministries in States become more and more unstable. Probably the reason is the unpredictable subjective nature of recruitment. Many first class graduates are known to have flunked UPSC examinations and 'compartmental students' topped the lists because of the strange method. The same essay which, evaluated by a Chandigarh or Allahabad examiner, fetches 90 per cent marks fetches 40 per cent if evaluated by a Calcutta examiner. Such cases are not hypothetical.

Another reason may be the fact that some States are becoming anti-Centre and so hostile to the cadres of all-India services. The pace-setter

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was Sardar Kairon : he favoured State civil servants whom he could control and relegated the IAS cadres to secondary posts. As the anti-Centre struggle picks up momentum, the powers of the all-India services are bound to be gradually pruned. In West Bengal, Mr Promode Das Gupta has already voiced the demand that Central services people be taken out of the West Bengal secretariat. The Food Minister in West Bengal is reported to be contemplating setting up a State Food Corporation, because the FCI officials have proved intractable.

What, however, will toll the death knell of the all-India services is the introduction of regional languages in the UPSC examinations. The Home Ministry is furiously working over finding out a mechanism to maintain uniformity of standards of evaluation. The ingenious devices so far proposed and experimented upon by it have, by its own account, failed. They are still working and are confident of success. It can be safely predicted, though, that after October this year, when the examinations for all-India civil services will be held, the UPSC will have turned into a mad house and the Lok Sabha another because its members will raise hundreds of cases of favouritism and malpractices in the UPSC examinations. The next step may be fixing a quota of vacancies for each State. The still next step may very well be abolition of all-India services and the States perhaps would be asked to recruit their own officers, which is not a bad idea, the fetish of national integration not withstanding.

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Campus Unrest

A correspondent writes :

The inauguration of the spring semester in many an American campus was marked by violent confrontations between authorities and students. There has been more violence since. The immediate cause of student protest is the growing social awareness among a cross section of the 6.5 million American students and their commitment to give universities a purposive existence. If the students are at times resorting to violence, it is perhaps because they think that a streak of violence, not sit-ins and other forms of peaceful protest alone, hastens the process of change. Among the issues involved, the black students' demand for segregated facilities, a black studies programme, a change in the parity of enrolment and a greater voice in the recruitment and firing of faculty members are the main subjects of discussion. The Blacks now refuse to become, unlike some Negroes, little middle-class black Sambos or orient themselves into a western Anglo-Saxon culture. They do not want to shed their blackness and long for an illusory integration. Mr Nathan Hare, Director of Black Studies at San Francisco State College, recently wrote that black teachers had a bitter controversy over the university curriculum and faculty appointments of white departmental chairmen "of various shades of racist persuasions. They would rather have a white moderate professor with a Ph.D. teaching a history sequence, starkly barren of blackness" than a better read black. They argue that, while framing courses, the white authorities aim at erasing the black perspective. The Blacks demand a comprehensive, integrated body of inter-disciplinary courses and will be "revolutionary and nationalistic" in content. The accent will be always on black perspective. Mr Roy Wilkins' (of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured Peoples) counter arguments that tax money cannot be used for setting up "racial enclaves" within

campuses, that universities cannot mobilise adequate resources for real study centres and find trained personnel are described as simply "appalling".

The university presidents are in an unenviable position; while the present set-up does not permit them to satisfy the demands of the protesters, strikes and sit-ins result in further restriction of their freedom. Mr Ronald Reagan, Governor of California, advocated an investigation by the Justice Department into students demonstrations at the recently held National Governor's Conference. Mr Reagan was looking for an alibi when he said that some foreign States like China and Cuba (even Russia was mentioned) were financing the wreckers. One official quipped, "life is not all that simple and we can't always look for external villains to explain away our problems." Even though the US Supreme Court has upheld the students' right to political protest, it is certain, as has been admitted by the Berkeley Chancellor, that the whole State machinery is bent on restricting the freedom of decision on the part of campus authorities.

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Congress Low Drama

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

FROM the Birla empire to Mr Morarji Desai to Mr Chandrasekhar, the focus has shifted in quick succession. The starting point was the demand for an inquiry into Birla company affairs, which, to be sure, the Birlas have not opposed directly but only the Government has. The Congress and the Government dread such an inquiry more than the Birla House does. This lay Mr Morarji Desai open to serious charges, leading to a counter-offensive by the Deputy Prime Minister's rag-tag following which demanded action against Mr Chandrasekhar.

The crisis in the Congress is thus sought to be reduced to a mere problem of intra-mural discipline. The

1951 resolution on discipline was resurrected from the archives and for the first time a whole generation of Congressmen realised that it was indiscipline to attack the policies of the party or the Governments run by it. The resolution was embellished with a couple of profound sentences banning sniping at individual Congressmen in public.

For all one knows, the Chandrasekhar affair might blow over before this piece gets into print. Or, an extreme possibility is that he would be crucified to safeguard somebody's factional interest. This is a sordid drama, the romantic idealism of a crusading Congressman being exploited for ends that are not wholly clean.

Whether he knows it or not, the issue around Mr Chandrasekhar is a mere extension of the factional fight between Mrs Indira Gandhi and Mr Desai. The Prime Minister thought she could utilise the opportunity to cut Mr Desai down to size but when the Deputy Prime Minister threatened to resign, she realised that his exit would endanger her own position at the Centre. She had to soft-pedal the allegations against Mr Desai and yet retain her "progressive" image by stalling disciplinary action against Mr Chandrasekhar.

But the de-escalation has not solved the crisis. The Desai lobby thought that by taking the issue to the Working Committee, it could force Mrs Gandhi's hands. But they had underestimated her capacity to manipulate things. She won the first round in the Working Committee by establishing her right to deal with the issue at the Congress Parliamentary Party level. The leadership of the party has been dragging its feet on the show-cause notice against Mr Chandrasekhar because the Prime Minister is not keen on it. For all one knows, the issue would go to the general body

of the party, where undoubtedly Mr Chandrasekhar would be cleared because it is a matter of majority-minority arithmetic and not issues.

The Desai lobby is now on the defensive because the demand for an inquiry into the allegations against his would be kept up by the Prime Minister's supporters. This will remain a live issue, to keep permanent pressure on Mr Desai and hold him on short leash. Already, the Attorney-General's view on certain old allegations against Mrs Tarakeshwari Sinha, a Morarji supporter, has been dug up by the Prime Minister's group. Mrs Sinha started the campaign against Mr Chandrasekhar and when her own indiscipline (attacks on the Government through newspaper articles) was brought to notice, her defence was that it was only criticism of policies and not personalities. Now this thin line no longer exists, after the latest Working Committee resolution. The immediate demand would be for a follow-up on the Attorney-General's view that a prima facie case existed against Mrs Sinha. Mrs Sinha has not been cleared by any judicial or quasi-judicial authority over the allegations against her some five years ago. It was a political decision in the days of the late Mr Lal Bahadur Shastri and Mr G. L. Nanda not to pursue the charges against her.

Thus it is an open war of attrition between the two factions, the Prime Minister playing a leading role directing her following at every stage. Factionalism acquires the garb of ideology and socialism is supposed to be at stake.

The Chandrasekhar episode is by no means a microcosm of the Congress today. The picture inside the Congress is more despicable than it would look from outside. The Prime Minister was installed in office through a rigged-up consensus. But her Cabinet is a caboodle. Everytime a controversial decision is taken by the Cabinet and it is not sufficiently "progressive" the Prime Minister's camp is quick to make it known to the Left Establishment correspondents that she was no party to the decision. Cabi-

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Bhasani Mujib Rift Aids Rightists

DACCA, March 9

THE deadlock in the central DAC on an "agreed formula" for RTC talks proved how genuine had been the concern of the left about the conspiracy of some of the rightist elements to smother the popular upsurge in the name of parleys.

Discredited, away from the people, Choudhry Mohammad Ali and Mian Mumtaz Daultana are back in their old game. As if they had not done enough harm to the country during the last 20 years, this time they saw to it that popular leaders from East Pakistan fell victims to their palace intrigue. One cannot but recall how Daultana had been particular in ensuring wide publicity to his reported demand for the presence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the RTC only to put the Sheikh to an embarrassing position on the question of representation as soon as he was available for participation in the intrigue-natched DAC parley.

The tragedy of DAC-Government parleys, however, does not lie in the conspiracy of Choudhry Mohammad Ali, Daultana or Nasrullah in luring popular leaders to their den of conspiracy. The misunderstanding between the popular leaders in East Pakistan in their approach to the problems facing the country will possibly prove to be the greatest disaster to the popular upsurge.

In both NAP and Awami League camps, there are elements who seem sworn to see that Bhashani and the Sheikh do not work together. Even before the Sheikh was released an atmosphere was created in which they could have only mutual disagreement, hatred and mistrust. So the Sheikh thought that the Moulana had left him in the lurch by talking too much about economic problems when the country needed some urgent political solutions. The Moulana had his own misgivings about joining Moudoodi, Choudhry Mohammad Ali and Daultana at a conference table.

The fact is that only a combination

of two parties—one with its political programmes, the other with its economic analysis of the situation—could have kept the power-seeking Punjab leaders out of the scene. The haste in which Sheikh Mujib was convinced of the utility of RTC by some of his partymen (?) was at the root of the subsequent disagreement between him and Moulana Bhashani.

Now it has become a prestige issue, with radical elements in both organisations spreading venom against each other. The only line could have been the solid unity of the student community who had clearly understood the issues involved.

It would be a pity if Daultanas would be the sole gainers from the blood of the martyrs.

Another report says: Would Ayub stage a come back? Caught up in the cross currents of speculation this question in the minds of the observers becomes more ominous with every passing moment.

What strengthens the rumours that he might yet make a last bid to remain in saddle is the support he is now getting from the Jamaat-i-Islami and some of its fellow travellers in the PDM.

Although the Jamaat promptly denied the report in a 'Pindi' paper about its alleged directive to workers to co-operate with the demonstrations that are being staged in favour of President Ayub, there is more to it than they would have us believe. The report was not based merely on the rejoinder Tufail Muhammad gave to Mr Bhutto's demand for the immediate resignation of President Ayub. Fact is, the President has enjoyed the Jamaat's support from the outset of the current movement which it bluntly dubbed as "unconstitutional methods used by elements given to anarchy and violence." And where the police have been missing, it is the Jamaat workers who have increasingly taken on the task of lathi-charging the peaceful processionists.

From *Holiday*, Dacca.

net proceedings are leaked out according to plan. So are Working Committee proceedings. Deliberations of the Congress Parliamentary Party executive are put out in a fashion to suit factional ends. The Prime Minister has been the best friend of the Birlas and in fact owes her election to their support but last week she said at a party meeting that the impression had gone round that what the Government had done on the Birla company affairs was not adequate. This detail was passed on to the Press with due care with a view to refurbishing Mrs Gandhi's radical image.

No wonder the Right Communists—not even the second party in any State—have been busy proffering the Prime Minister gratuitous advice on who she should choose as her coalition allies to stay in office beyond 1972. Inside the Congress, the Patil line is there. He wants coalitions with what he considers like-minded parties. This line is sure to be more valid than the one put across by the Lenins of Asaf Ali Road.

To what extent the Right Communists are being utilised in the present factional fight is hard to tell now. But the co-operation extends all along the line, from marginal support to the factional war to selling the Government's line on the Sino-Soviet border clash. Is it not too much of a coincidence that the entire Left Establishment Press was writing about a Bonn-Peking axis just on the eve of the recent clashes, and after the clashes, followed up the same line? How come there is even verbal similarities in the writings, the same hackneyed phrases and the same hackneyed data often under the Berlin date-line to confuse the readership? Going by the contents of these writings, one cannot help asking: Have Mrs Indira Gandhi and Mr Dinesh Singh begun believing the folk-tale about the Bonn-Peking axis peddled by the Soviet Government through certain newspapers?

MARCH 17, 1969

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The New Agricultural Strategy

GOPAL TRIBEDY

THE failures on the agricultural front during the Third Five Year Plan made economists and policy-makers think of a break-through in agriculture. In the "Approach to the Fourth Five Year Plan" the Planning Commission aims at a growth rate of about 5% per annum in this sector. The basis of this expectation is the increase in production as a result of the various policy measures taken under the new agricultural strategy adopted in 1965-66 and continued thereafter. In 1966-67 and 1967-68 the agricultural production level was considerably higher than in the previous year and this gave rise to optimism.

The new agricultural strategy mainly consists of the Intensive Agricultural District Programme and the High Yielding Varieties Programme. Under the first there would be intensive efforts to make available credit, seeds and manures through co-operatives and panchayats so that the peasants adopt improved practices. The programme was formulated on the basis of the recommendations of the Agricultural Production Team sponsored by the Ford Foundation. It has been launched in agriculturally favourable areas since 1960-61 as pilot projects and is being widened every year. The second programme emphasises the use of hybrid varieties of seeds which are responsive to high doses of fertilisers. This scheme was launched in 1965-66. The Reserve Bank of India sanctions special credit to co-operative societies to meet the credit requirements of those members who adopt the programme. Apart from these two special programmes, other policy measures include augmentation and intensive utilisation of irrigation facilities, increase in supplies of inputs and a special programme of multiple cropping through the introduction of short duration varieties.

The impact of the new strategy on production as a whole, instead of in a few selected areas, depends on the availability of the necessary inputs and the nature and role of the village organisations. The effectiveness of the high-yielding varieties of seeds in raising total production is determined by the quantity of fertiliser applied and the guaranteed supply of water either through adequate rainfall or through the provision of extensive irrigation facilities. Since rainfall is not assured, the programme is inapplicable in the absence of irrigation facilities, because nobody will use it if there is no scope for continuing it for a long period. At the same time, the fertiliser requirements must be supplied from domestic production. A break in imports would break up the programme. The foreign exchange crisis makes imports most unpredictable.

The accompanying table shows, in the first place, that only about one-fifth of the area under cultivation was irrigated in 1966-67 and 1967-68. It should be remembered that even these irrigation facilities involved an investment of Rs. 4466 crores by the government during 1951-68. One can guess future coverage if a programme of new irrigation facilities is drawn up. But the Approach Paper is vague in this respect. Considering the effects of the past investment on

irrigation projects, a better expectation cannot be projected for the future. Secondly, the per acre availability of chemical fertilisers was 3,191 kg in 1966-67 and 5,300 kg in 1967-68. Even the larger figure did not satisfy one per cent of the total requirement. Though there was an appreciable rise in the quantity available within a year, the rise in domestic production was from 1,065 kg per acre to 1,380 kg per acre during the same period. How the domestic production of fertilisers would be raised to meet the requirements of the new agricultural strategy is not indicated by the Planning Commission. The new materials of the fertiliser industry are mainly the by-products of the petro-chemical and iron and steel industries and so an increase in fertiliser production is conditioned by their expansion. In the absence of a well integrated plan of development of all the related industries agricultural production will be increasingly dependent on foreign fertilisers. How far the imports can be increased and for how long are extremely uncertain matters. So, from the purely technical point of view, the new strategy is unlikely to produce a sustained rate of growth of 5 per cent per annum in the agricultural sector.

The agricultural programmes of the government cannot work in a

TABLE SHOWING THE AVAILABILITY OF IRRIGATION FACILITIES AND FERTILISERS.

		1966-67	1967-68
1. Area under cultivation	(in million acres)	410.0	415.0*
2. Total area irrigated	(in million acres)	81.5	87.0
3. 2 as a percentage of 1		19.8	20.0
4. Fertiliser availability :			
(a) Domestic production	(in thousand tonnes)	437.0	573.0
(b) Imports	(in thousand tonnes)	872.0	1623.0
Total	(in thousand tonnes)	1309.0	2196.0
5. Per acre availability of fertilisers	(in kg.)	3,191	5,300
of which domestic production	(in kg.)	1,065	1,380

* The area for 1967-68 is not accurately known and so the figure has been taken for the highest in the recent past.

Compiled from Reports on Currency and Finance published by the RBI.

vaccum; they must be operated through village-level organisations. The plan is to make available necessary inputs to the peasants through co-operatives; credit societies are to provide the finance for members of co-operatives to buy the inputs. Thus institutional factors are as important as technical conditions for input supply.

Not Encouraging

In this respect, past experience has not been encouraging. The government established State-sponsored co-operatives which receive loans and assistance from various official agencies. The progress, in terms of the number of new societies and the volume of loans and other transactions, is not insignificant. Co-operative credit which was only 3% of the total rural credit in 1951-52 is at present around 20-25 per cent of the total. Several specialised institutions like Agricultural Refinance Corporation, Land Development Banks, Warehousing Corporations etc. are there and the State Bank of India has been given specific directions for increasing its participation in agricultural credit. These institutional changes had been introduced long before the new agricultural strategy was undertaken. But Indian agriculture has never shown steady progress in the past. So the root cause of weakness lies elsewhere and a change in the super-structure is not sufficient to ensure the necessary progress.

The most important drawback is the land relations in rural India. A major portion of the land is owned by non-cultivators who have their land cultivated mostly by share-croppers and lessees. The landowners extract the whole of the economic surplus not only in the form of crop-share and rent but also in the form of an exorbitantly high interest on loans to the peasants as well as low prices paid to them at the time of distress sales during the harvest. Moreover, the insecurity of tenure hangs permanently on the heads of the actual cultivators. The new institutional developments have failed to protect the peasants from the three-pronged exploitation of high rent, high interest and high profit. All these

three factors, in most cases, help the same class of the landowning gentry. They are socially, politically and economically so powerful in the rural sector that all the new institutions are absorbed by them and turned into tools of exploitation.

The new agricultural strategy is to work through the same institutions and under the existing system of landholding. Since the present pattern of

working of the village-level organisations does not provide any guarantee that the actual peasants will increasingly enjoy the benefits of improved production, the strategy is not likely to produce more than marginal results. The present system is incapable of arousing the motivational forces necessary to impel the wide mass of the peasantry to put the programme into action.

Calcutta Diary

CHARAN GUPTA

A friend who happened to be in a Government of India team touring the country to assess the progress and problems of the New Agricultural Strategy tells me the following. The team happened to be doing Burdwan, which is the district picked out for special treatment under the Strategy, in the week following the mid-term poll. The members of the team were taken to nearly half-a-dozen villages, and everywhere were chaperoned by the usual retinue of West Bengal Government officials, may be one Additional Director of Agriculture, two Deputy Directors, several IADP Project Executive Officers, Sub-Divisional Agricultural Officers, Block Development Officers, Lok Sevaks, and so on. In a typical village, the team would be taken first to the lush fields where, thanks to the dispensations under the Strategy and the availability of controlled irrigation, production has been doubled or tripled; members of the team would be shown with pride the dwarf varieties of wheat, the up-and-coming *boro* paddy, mostly ADT-27 or IR 8, the newly installed power-driven pumps, one or two deep tube-wells; they would be told of the increasing difficulties of getting labour in transplanation or harvesting time. Following this 'field survey', the team would be led to a school or a library building, where a meeting with all those villagers who have benefited from the Strategy — for example, through supply of seeds and fertiliser and credit—has been laid out. Amid

tea and snacks, a question-and-answer session would ensue: the usual set of queries about why fertiliser prices are so high, why the DVC authorities refuse to release water beyond March 31, why the Government is trying to make a profit while supplying the improved seeds, what about still easier credit arrangements. My friend would listen to all such griping, and toward the end shot a question: what proportion of the cultivating households was represented in the meeting? About 15 per cent—or thereabouts—would be the answer. Does that mean that only this 15 per cent of the villagers have benefited from the New Agricultural Strategy? Yes, Sir. Amongst those present, would the gentleman with the least land please raise his hand? A hand is duly raised. Amongst all who are present here, your landholding is the smallest? Yes, Sir. How much land do you have, Sir? Eight acres. Now my friend turns to the West Bengal Government officials: does that mean that in this village nobody who has less than eight acres of land has benefited from the Package Programme? Yes, Sir, that is the case. How come the small farmers—those with less acres—have been excluded from the Programme? Well, Sir, they were not exactly excluded, but they could not get any loan from the village cooperative society. How did that happen? The society had no funds this year, and the district cooperative society refused to make advances to it, because it had defaulted on its past

loans. What went wrong with the co-operative society? Well, Sir, thereby hangs a story: this year, fresh elections took place for the Board of the Society, and the small farmers ousted the previous office-holders, most of whom are present at this meeting. As soon as that happened, these gentlemen refused to repay the money they had borrowed from the society. So, although the small farmers now control the society, it has no funds, and therefore you must appreciate, Sir, why we have not invited any of the small farmers to this meeting. They cannot benefit from the Strategy and why should you waste your valuable time discussing things with them?

What about the share-croppers, my friend persisted. Oh, yes, if the co-operative society has funds, they can borrow from it against hypothecation of the crop, but there is a ceiling. What is the ceiling? Rs. 200 per annum. But it is too small a sum. Yes, Sir, that is why we have excluded the share-croppers too from the Package Programme. Can the agricultural labourers obtain any advances from the co-operative society? Of course, not, Sir, they cannot even afford to be members. None of them is present here? No, Sir, they are not present here; what have ordinary labourers to do with the New Agricultural Strategy?

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The meeting would near the end. Casually, my friend would ask where the polling booth was for the election. Several voices would answer: Right, here, Sir; in this very building. How many valid votes were cast in this booth? 820, Sir. How many for the Congress? 141, Sir. How many for the CPI(M)? 679, Sir. But we can assure you, Sir, of those present here, Sir, none amongst us has voted for the communists; all our votes were cast for the Congress.

* * *

Polarisation, there you are. The Americans will scarcely recognise this, but the New Agricultural Strategy, which they—and their blue-eyed protégé, Mr C. Subramaniam—introduced to lick the problem of agricultural production in the country, can only

hasten the march of communism here. They should analyse the results of the mid-term election in West Bengal with a little introspection. In the vast stretches of Burdwan, Birbhum and Bankura, the Congress has got exactly 2 out of 50 seats. In the rice bowl of Midnapore, 6 out of 35. And in 24-Parganas, with its lush paddy tracts, 4 out of 50. In village after village, polarisation of the kind my friend observed in Burdwan has occurred, an occurrence which can be directly, causally linked with the New Agricultural Strategy. Thanks to the Strategy, the top 10 or 15 per cent of the village population have trebled or quadrupled their assets and earnings over the last five or six years—the manifestation of this is altogether visible: new *pucca* structures with dazzling coats of paint, electricity, radios, pumps and tubewells, sophisticated apparel, one or two tractors, good and rich food—, but the small farmers have been generally left out. There has been no trickling down effect on the labourers either. My friend did a spot checking of this fact in several villages: real wages, very definitely, have *not* gone up. In the early 1960's, a labourer would get 1 seer of rice and between 12 annas and a rupee. Nowadays, he—or she—gets 1 kilogramme of rice and maybe between one rupee and one rupee-and-a-half. Given a modicum of organisation, the small farmers and the landless labourers can be made to combine and vote solidly against the Congress-sponsored rich farmer. This is precisely what has happened in the villages of southern West Bengal. I dare say some big farmers, here and there, might also have voted for the United Front for their own private reasons, but there can be no doubt about the general picture.

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Short of some very funny happenings in New Delhi, or of the telescoping of the process by a revolution, as per the apprehension of the London *Economist*, the United Front Government is to rule in West Bengal for the next five years. What is it to do in regard to the rural structure? If the mandate is not for flouting, the New

Agricultural Strategy has to be dumped straightaway with contempt. The Government of India needs to be told that, agriculture being a State subject, it is none of New Delhi's business to tell us what should be the strategy to follow for agricultural development. The Centre may believe in a certain theory of economic growth, it may even believe in a perverse philosophy of income distribution, but, under the federal structure, Plan or no Plan, a State like West Bengal will be perfectly at liberty to treat with contempt such a theory and such a philosophy. Once the issues of provision of inputs and supply of resources—including that of credit—are thrashed out, the Centre must get out of this State's agriculture, and stay out. And the same holds for the assorted American foundations and other equally shady do-gooders.

But this is only a beginning. The State Government officials will also have to be educated about the change of the old order. In all seasons it is a difficult task to reach down to the poor, the rural poor especially, and particularly for the city-bred. The Strategy was so charmingly simple in its application: meet the few rich in the village, accept their hospitality, in return shower on them the entire benefits of the Government's subsidy operations. Even in terms of class background, there was a remarkable harmony between the Government officials and the rich farmers. It may now break the heart of these officers to desert their old friends and kin, and to start worrying about the problems of the small farmers and the landless labourers. The adjustment might prove difficult; there may even be the temptation to divert back, on the sly, the advantages of the Government machinery for furthering the cause of the kulaks. The United Front ought to have no qualms about what to do under such circumstances. The mandate of the mid-term election has been for social change, for whatever bits of socialism can be ushered in within the confines of the existing polity. Those who try to thwart such a social change have to be dealt with mercilessly. Any vacillation in this

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matter, and the United Front would not even know what would hit them—and hit even before there is a next time.

The Press

The Congress Malady

COMMENTATOR

* *
Let me mention something else. The Front has gone to town in publicising its intention to maintain a high level of rice procurement, and, during the current season, to try to exceed the target of 450,000 tonnes which had been earlier decided upon by the bureaucrats. This is a most sensible policy to follow, for one does not know how the coming monsoon is going to turn out, and one *does* know that in regard to the supply of rice, New Delhi will continue to be most unhelpful. But—it is no use mincing words—you cannot allow rice to move freely into Calcutta and at the same time expect the target of procurement to be realised several times over. The Ministers should see the danger of any laxity in this matter. Ever since the Ministry came in, the police, presumably under instruction, have turned a blind eye to the free sale of rice within Calcutta: the middle class and the upper middle class residents of the city, with their superior purchasing power, are lapping it up; a few hundreds of distressed women and unemployed youth are also conceivably making a few extra rupees a day following this virtual lifting of the police cordon. But the United Front should be in a position to forsake the temptation of this highly temporary popularity. If the rains fail in June and July, it will come to rue this worse-than-shortsighted policy. Or am I destined to believe in the proposition of Congress Tweedledum and Front Tweedledee?

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MARCH 22, 1969

SO many developments have taken place in the Congress in the past few days that even the budget session of Parliament has receded to the background. Congress crises have a way of their own of solving themselves without hurting and, what is more important, displacing anybody; when the present difficulties of the party are over it will perhaps be found that none of the familiar faces is missing and everyone is free to do what he wills. Nevertheless, they make good copy for newspapers and relieve leaders-writers of their worries. In the mass sulking undertaken by the Congress leaders not much notice has been taken of the Congress defeat in the mid-term election in Pondicherry. The DMK has secured just half the seats in the 30-member Assembly while the strength of the Congress party has been reduced from 22 to 10. The former French Settlement is now about to have its first non-Congress Ministry. The Congress President, Mr Nijalingappa, was careful not to keep his offer of resignation valid for long and allowed himself to be persuaded to withdraw the offer within twentyfour hours as his Atulyada had done a few weeks ago. Mr Nijalingappa's resignation was a counterblast to Mr Subramaniam's resignation from the Congress Working Committee in protest against the inclusion of the Raja of Ramgarh in the Bihar Cabinet. Then it was the turn of the Congress President to persuade Mr Subramaniam to withdraw his resignation.

More obscure was the position over Mr Morarji Desai's threat to quit the Government if some Congress members did not stop vilifying him. The Congress MP whose remarks were the immediate cause of the Deputy Prime Minister's pique refused to express regret, and it seems that Mr Desai's feelings have been assuaged

by the expression of concern by other leaders of the party over the matter. The Congress manoeuvrings in Madhya Pradesh are yet to succeed.

Commenting on the "sorry mud-slinging" *The Hindustan Times* says that the Deputy Prime Minister has become a target of attack as he is supposed to represent the right. Yet it is strange that the left is in full cry against his new budget measure for taxing agricultural wealth. Likewise the fake issue of nationalising Birla House in homage to Gandhiji's martyrdom has been agitated by persons whose antipathy to Gandhian ideals renders their present conduct the more suspect. In both cases, the target is what is sought to be projected as monopoly and its protectors. Some of the opposition to the Tata Mithapur fertiliser project and to earlier proposals for off-shore drilling for oil stems from similar considerations which are more concerned with the pursuit of ideology than with getting the economy moving forward to the long-awaited stage of self-sustaining growth. In the present state of the country's development, the divide between the so-called left and right is more often than not quite artificial in view of the tremendous pressures and limited options deriving from the overwhelming fact of poverty. The more important divide is between the forces of outworn tradition and superstition on the one hand and those of modernity and scientific progress on the other. All the world over, ideology is becoming increasingly outmoded with the advance of technology. It is time we recognised this in India. It is tragic that the Congress should present a spectacle of rift, infirmity and indiscipline even at the Centre when what the country needs is political stability and purposeful leadership. With what moral authority can the party discipline its State units or set a worthy example of principled conduct when there is so much rot in Delhi? Understandably the paper takes the opportunity to refer to the "Birla affair". It says that a fairly thorough internal inquiry has been conducted by the Government and investigations are still proceeding

in respect of certain charges. The Government is satisfied that no *prima facie* case exists for further action and both Houses of Parliament and the Congress Parliamentary Party have decided against the appointment of a commission of inquiry in the absence of adequate grounds for adopting such a course. Certain M.Ps., including some Congressmen, are not satisfied. But those engaged in a political vendetta, whether against political figures or particular business houses, will seldom be satisfied until they have achieved their objective which is more political than judicial.

The Hindu regards Mr Subramaniam's stand on the question of Ministry-making in Bihar as one of principle. The paper says that it may seem rather unkind of Mr Subramaniam to have upset the apple-cart by resigning from the Congress Working Committee rather than approve of the inclusion of the Raja of Ramgarh in the half-built Congress Ministry. Nevertheless, a question of principle is involved which cannot be lightly brushed aside. The courts have held that the Raja abused his constitutional powers as a Minister to advocate his own financial interests at the cost of the State of Bihar. It cannot, of course, be denied that the Raja is a popular figure in one region of the State, for he and the members of his family have been consistently elected in several elections. Though it had been hoped that he would stand aside and be content to let some other members of his Janata Party accept Cabinet posts, he forced the hand of Mr Harihar Singh, the Congress leader, by insisting on a ministership for himself. As any "Triple Alliance" Cabinet is also likely to be a minority Government, the Congress could take the risk of giving up the support of the Raja of Ramgarh's group, which is in any case highly unreliable. Mr Subramaniam's point is that if the Congress begins to make alliances with leaders who have suffered judicial strictures, its own reputation is likely to be permanently tarnished and it will not be in a position to criticise deviations from the

norm of political conduct. The State of Bihar has been unfortunate in its elected leadership in the past, and it is important that standards should be raised at least in the future.

Only Solution

Somewhat vaguely *The Times of India* has suggested that a mid-term election is the only solution of the problem of Madhya Pradesh. The paper says that in the light of the recent developments Mr D. P. Mishra's exertions in organising a march of his supporters to Raj Bhavan in a show of strength seem largely wasted labour. Apart from that, the whole spectacle, becoming increasingly common, of the elected representatives of the people being lined up before the Governor as in an identification parade to prove their party affiliations, is so utterly degrading that it is time something was done to put an end to it. Mr Mishra may indeed have succeeded in piecing together a majority with an assortment of defectors and re-defectors. What the party, or at any rate its central leadership, should, however, consider is how long a ministry which has to depend for its existence on the fickle loyalty of these new recruits can last. What is involved here is no issue of principle, since the Congress seems to have as little use for principles as any other party but the strictly pragmatic one of survival. Judged by that test, the most elementary prudence should suggest that the party should interest itself more in winning back the confidence of the electors than in purchasing the support of a few members from the other side in order to build up a fragile majority. Considering the nature of the ramshackle coalition the new Chief Minister leads it will be too much for him to expect his followers to pull together as a team. He must consider himself lucky if he can make sure that they are not pulling too violently in different directions. Meanwhile any hope of order and stability in the administration will have to be deferred until the electorate gives a clearer verdict at the next poll.

Commenting on the recent deve-

lopments in the Congress Ranajit Roy writes in *Hindusthan Standard* that Congressmen all over India are looking askance at the happenings in Bihar over their party's Ministry-making efforts. The repercussions are being felt strongly in Delhi, and the party has become a veritable laughing stock. The Congress has always been a kind of *Dharamsala* where people of all kinds of views could take shelter. The parting of ways seems at last to have come. The cleavage in the central leadership has been brought in the open by a prominent member of the Working Committee itself. Ministry-making in Bihar typifies the inner-party struggle for a new policy. All sections of the Congress have become votaries of alliance with other parties. The fashionable slogan is for an "alliance with like-minded parties". It is not easy to discover like-mindedness among different parties. In any case, different Congressmen have different ideas. Some of them would not mind joining hands with the Swatantra and the Jana Sangh while some others would not touch either of these parties with a pair of tongs but would welcome an alliance with even the left communists. A great deal of noise is being made by a section of Congressmen over the inclusion of the Raja of Ramgarh in the Bihar Cabinet. If one can swallow a camel one need not strain at a gnat. After hugging the Janata Party as a coalition partner, why should the Congress be so shy of accepting the Raja whose pocket organisation it is? The fact is that the Congress has, as advocated by Mr S. K. Patil, taken a jump for an alliance with parties of the right. Mr Subramaniam has made it known that he does not consider the Swatantra and the Jana Sangh as "like-minded parties" for the Congress. This is the view of the Prime Minister also. Whether those who advocate an alliance with the leftists will have their way, it is difficult to say. What is beyond doubt is that neither the left nor the right in the Congress will give up its position without a bitter fight which has been joined. The left in the Congress

has an uphill task. Most of the left parties have the Congress as their principal enemy. Kerala and Bengal have shown what left unity can

achieve. The tendency is likely to grow and the Congress, if it must have alliances may only have the right parties to join hands with.

Reincarnation

A. CHAKRAVORTY

CERTAIN sections of the daily Press have been for more than a year now treating us to stories of "reincarnation" bolstered up by so-called scientific evidence. It is no wonder, however, that such stuff should be put on the market by a Press which has regularly been featuring ghost and ghoulish myths under such banner headlines as "Things that Reason fails to explain" along with such exercises in reason as astrological forecasts and weekly horoscopes.

Dr Hemendranath Banerjee, Professor of Rajasthan University, assailed sceptic minds some time ago with a series of articles in a Calcutta daily supposed to contain convincing "evidence" for materialistically minded disbelievers. He also appeared in a number of meetings and interviews in Calcutta last winter and was greeted with blaring publicity by some Bengali dailies. We leave it to psychiatrists to interpret why winter happens to be the season for a good crop of reincarnation stories. One naturally remembers in this connection "winter's tales"—those winter fireside fabrications.

Some of us had the opportunity of listening to Dr Dwijen Ganguly of Calcutta University at a meeting on the subject of "reincarnation" organised by the psychological journal *Manab Man* (The Human Mind). We should note, in passing, that Dr Ganguly had earlier presided over a meeting at the Royal Asiatic Society, Calcutta, addressed by Dr Hemen Banerjee. At the *Manab Man* meeting Dr Ganguly, while briefly narrating the antecedents of Dr Banerjee, said that the latter had approached him at the 1960 session of the Indian Science Congress to officially sponsor

a lecture on his parapsychological experiments on reincarnation, precognition, clairvoyance, etc. Since parapsychology was yet to be recognised as a branch of science, Dr Ganguly could not officially sponsor such a lecture but non-officially made a gentlemanly gesture by allowing Dr Banerjee to ventilate his views to the assembled delegates. Referring to the Royal Asiatic Society meeting Dr Ganguly said that there he had remarked that Dr Banerjee's approach could hardly be described as the approved approach of modern science; that the latter's parapsychology had nothing in common with scientific psychology except the partial similarity in name; that science imperatively demands generalisations whereas Dr Banerjee emphasised and depended on the experiences of individuals. To illustrate his point Dr Ganguly said that Dr Banerjee had produced a taped record to prove how a "reincarnated" soul could recite Sanskrit slokas memorised in a former birth, though in his present birth he had had absolutely nothing to do with Sanskrit. A taped record, commented Dr Ganguly, was inadmissible as evidence in a case like this. There fore he recounted the experience of the late Dr Girin Bose, a pioneer of psycho-analysis in this country—an experience communicated personally by Dr Bose to Dr Ganguly. Dr Bose had been called in to examine a case of "reincarnation", the reincarnated soul being a rich woman. While waiting for the patient in her drawing room full of books, Dr Bose accidentally discovered a piece of paper among the books, read it out of curiosity and replaced it where it had been found. When later the patient

said that she really did not belong to that place and that family and gave her "true" life-story, Dr Bose had a pleasant surprise, for her story was an exact reproduction of what he a short while ago had read in that piece of paper among her books. Apparently that dust-covered paper had been read by the lady with keen interest long long ago and in course of time it had gone clean out of her mind. But later some severe mental shock had revived its memory and she had identified herself with the heroine of that story. This is how a student of mental science should interpret a psychical phenomenon like this. Dr Ganguly further said that recital of passages in an unknown language, doing gigantic arithmetical sums and things of the sort were, undoubtedly stupendous feats of memory but there was nothing supernatural about them. Such prodigies, Dr Ganguly said, were called "idiot savants" by psychologists.

Not on Trust

Dr Dhiren Ganguly of the Pavlov Institute, Calcutta, who had initiated the discussion at the first meeting on the subject, said that since science was a body of knowledge ascertained by observation and experiment, critically tested, systematized and brought under general principles, Dr Banerjee's parapsychology could not be regarded as satisfying the requirements of science. He said that science was ready to accept new truths but not on trust and certainly not under the guidance of a mystical faith, but after experimental verification. It is a great pity, he added, that Dr Banerjee's conclusions regarding "reincarnation" were not verifiable by scientific tests. Dr Ganguly further stated that the "cases" narrated by Dr Banerjee were nothing new, and that similar cases had been long ago discussed and quietly disposed of by psychologists. He referred to and quoted from a member of treatises on psychology, of which I happen to remember only McDougall's *Outline of Abnormal Psychology*, from which he read out, among other things the cases of Maria and Helen Smith.

When about 20 years old, Maria, under a terrible mental shock caused by the death of her father, claimed herself to be the reincarnation of a Spanish gipsy girl. She spoke and wrote at times an imperfect form of the Spanish language and always spoke English with a foreign accent. Her behaviour could be put down to her having read some romance of a Spanish gipsy girl or having heard from her Spanish schoolfellows stories of that kind. What is more important, Maria at one time was fascinated by a man of Spanish features and half-Spanish parentage. Maybe her fantasies were woven around this figure.

Helen Smith was responsible for four sub-conscious creations. She believed that she had lived 500 years ago as an Arab chief's daughter who became the favourite wife of a Hindu prince of Kanara, India. Flournoy, the famous psychiatrist, said that it was a subconsciously elaborated fantasy incorporating very skilfully fragments of knowledge picked up in a haphazard fashion. Helen also believed that she was an incarnation of Marie Antoinette. The scientific explanation for this was that her restricted mode of life and unfulfilled social aspirations flowered forth in such fantasies. The third sub-conscious creation of Helen was a young man who had been translated to the planet Mars. This young man was a member of the same seance circle to which Helen belonged. Helen fancied herself to be the incarnation of this young man who claimed to have gone to Mars. The fun of the whole thing was that Helen's Martian language was discovered to be essen-

tially composed of European roots and chiefly French. She possessed, Flournoy explains, an "infantile puerile" quality and the Martian fantasy was constructed by some infantile subconscious personality within herself.

From the above he who cares may see the difference between the views of McDougall and Flournoy which are scientific and those of Dr Banerjee which are metaphysical. Though claiming a place for his parapsychology alongside the exact sciences Dr Banerjee is frank enough to admit that his aim is to rehabilitate metaphysics. In an interview published in the *Jugantar*, a Calcutta daily, on March 10, 1968, he replied to the questions "What is the value of this research?" by saying that he aimed at ending the long-standing hostility between religion and science. He said, "Some causes and effects have an existence and they function even while they violate universal laws. We may accept these causes and effects as things under the guidance of spiritual laws." So this is how Dr Banerjee seeks to effect a compromise between science and religion. Would it not be cruel to measure the experiences of so devout a soul with a scientific yardstick? But it would be wrong to think that he is other-worldly for he is very much alive to the worldly utility of his theory. In the course of the interview already mentioned he said that the knowledge of a previous birth would lead to a mighty social upheaval immensely wholesome in its consequences. Indeed, if people may be convinced of the importance of a previous birth, they may easily be made to gulp down the other Hindu theory of "Karma-fal" which holds that one's activities in a former birth determine one's happiness or suffering in the present. From such a belief in pre-determination to the one that we should accept our present life as it is, is but a short step. Spiritualism fosters such beliefs apparently altruistically but really to perpetuate the status quo in the interests of the powers that be. So we who want to change our society should beware.

Psychedelhi

M. R.

NEW Delhi is about the most spy-encounter-spy capital in the world and we owe this to our non-alignment, which outside the Government, has grown into a prosperously fatuous industry. There could be very little espionage in a capital whose non-alignment is twice-blessed. Those who shower aid on us have a right to know what we do with their aid and someone's aid because nothing, including family planning, is possible in this country without aid. Or the aid-givers could pool all their knowledge on what we are doing with it. So much so, there is only counter-espionage here, each side trying to tell the other what it knows. No wonder the exposures about the CIA could be traced to the Soviet effort while the anti-KGB stories as a rule originate in the U.S. camp.

With the revival of the Cold War (maybe a passing phase) there is a spurt in the kind of activity that only the non-aligned racketeers could promote. The emergence of one lobby needs to be countered with another lobby in a non-aligned country. If we had openly aligned to one of the super-Powers, nobody would have bothered about the intellectuals of this Capital who are now being wooed by one side or the other. Those who sign statements or letters denouncing the U.S. role in Vietnam are the people most likely to go to the United States as visiting professors while those who demand India's alignment with the United States are the people most likely to be recognised with invitations to the Soviet Union. It pays to keep one's alignment open because all commitment is at a discount when the country itself professes non-alignment. There are many personal fortunes to be made out of a cold war.

But the unabashed dishonesty of all . . . Marxist circles are promoted by groups of college teachers to manage somebody's candidature at the Senate or Academic Council elections. The absolute lack of commitment is illus-

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trated by many things. Those who wrote learned articles attacking the flabbiness of the Soviet Revolution at 50, invoked Chinese arguments to denounce the present Soviet order. What was being celebrated was not what took place after 1917 but only 1917 and what led to it. Those who said the Soviet revolution has been betrayed should in the first place identify themselves with the objectives of the revolution. They must have believed in the revolution in the first place. Or another instance. The Left Establishment has discovered a sudden solicitude for the Third World and the many Vietnams that would break out in Latin America. Afro-Asian solidarity has been exploited to its bankruptcy and the same "peace partisans" of yore who thought Congress policies and national liberation movements go together are taking over the Latin American cause. Do these intellectuals or just political careerists honestly believe in a Latin-American

model insurrection at home? It is easier to support someone else's revolution even while demanding the quarantining of China and the arrest of extremist communists and tacitly supporting the Government's trade embargo on Cuba. Armed insurrection for someone far away and Gandhian transition to socialism suits non-alignment fine.

Cultural Subversion

Fighting cultural subversion is the current fashion here, alongside garish kurtas and baggy trousers. The subversion is from several quarters and not from the United States alone. Institutions are being subverted by both the super-Powers and their interests converge in India.

The subversion is taking place with official connivance because a non-aligned Government has to keep contending lobbies alive. It suits the Government to patronise all because either of them could be used in turn.

Look at the composition of some of the "unofficial" Indian delegations going abroad. Time was when the delegations used to be packed with "leftist" Congressmen or ex-Congressmen and their sole objective was to fight China in international forums, come back home and report that China was completely isolated at such and such a meet. Even the working journalists were used once in this game at the Afro-Asian conference of journalists in Djakarta soon after the 1962 border war. This is where the new kind of corruption of opinion leaders began. Some of the communist front organisations became respectable overnight because Congressmen were associated with it.

No wonder neither of the super-Powers has much respect for the Indian opinion leaders. Most of them can be bought and those who cannot be are inconsequential. The Americans know that the most articulate anti-communist is not really committed

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to anything just as the Russians know those who profess faith in socialism do not really mean it. But everyone has his use in a cold war situation or when opinion in India is building against one of the two countries. When the pressure of one lobby makes things uncomfortable for the Government, it revives the other lobby. There is an amorphous bomb lobby and an anti-bomb lobby, there is an Israel lobby and the Arab lobby, there is a Washington lobby and a Moscow lobby (and none of them really founded on ideological positions).

With all this, is the Government really serious about curbing the role of foreign money in Indian politics? Those of the ruling party or hovering on its periphery head the numerous friendship organisations the sources of whose finance would not bear scrutiny. The Government has found all of them useful at some point or the other.

Mr Chavan has promised Parliament his conclusions on the findings of a Central Intelligence Bureau's probe into the role of foreign money in the 1967 elections. The report of the CIB might not be palatable to any of the major political parties. Perhaps it would be something like the Bank of China probe report. Publication of the long-forgotten report might damn a few communist leaders who incidentally are now anti-Peking but it would also damn a few Congress leaders or their close relatives. It is some kind of a balance of terror because the ramifications of foreign money are so extensive that while every major political party denounces it no party would like publication of the CIB's findings without the Home Minister "processing" it. So the flow of foreign money continues in a hundred surreptitious ways to finance individuals, institutions and political parties often without their knowledge. Foreign money flows in to support a particular candidate against another without the knowledge of the candidate. What else is subversion?

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"Visual Theatre"

Z. H. KHAN

WHEN the creative mind is unable to accept certain material facts simply because it means the giving up of some personal privileges or advantages, it develops the ability to confuse basic issues. It rationalises and by a process akin to involution it curls up upon itself. I purposely use the word involution because I want to point out that what this "cultured" mind usually reacts against is radical change or, in one word, revolution. Every new fad which diverts or distracts the mind, therefore, finds immediate response from the votaries of the status quo. It takes a truly great artist to support and at times initiate, a system which would emancipate a large section of human beings: art beautifies and the greatest art would beautify everything.

The theatre is a composite form of art. It depends on painting, architecture, dance, literature, music and mime to communicate its ideas. It therefore, reflects the various movements which art generally follows. It is for this reason that theorists throughout the ages have tried to evolve or discover a medium which would be considered the exclusive language of the theatre, but in vain. Although various techniques have been tried, the spoken word still dominates and the theatre, while using as many of the artistic forms as possible, still depends mainly upon language to carry its meaning. In olden times it was thought that "mimes" and "masked plays" were a near solution but they have failed either to stand the test or to express fully the meaning of their times.

Recently under the sponsorship of Max Muller Bhavan a Franco-German troupe visited the city and presented three shows, one in German, one in French, and one in Mime.

The "mimic sketches" under the direction of Wolfram Mehring consisted of nine short items which were more dance than mime: visually pleasing but intellectually sterile. The

one exception was the item titled "The Catch" but that was by Grillon. It was well conceived and executed.

We have already seen some and read about various movements in art inspiring similar and related forms in the theatre and all of them have been *visual*: the expressionist, impressionist, existentialist, realist and even absurdist. The only enduring work has been that which applied to the life of men. The stage has indulged in spectacles and extravaganzas but these titillated temporarily and were then cast on the rubbish heap of memory.

Although "Theatre de la Mandragore" asserts that the "Visual Theatre" of Mehring is "a new art form which poses a novel task to body and voice" because "the traditional theatre depends solely on the word", the statement is factually incorrect.

The origin of the theatre lay in one-man performances in mime with the chorus providing the verbal link between the "actor" and his audience. Dance training and voice training have always been equally important ingredients in the actor's preparatory period, the former to make body movement and gesture meaningful and the latter for the dialogue to be intelligible.

Perhaps the dialogue in the French and German languages of the other two plays interpreted the "visual theatre" more clearly. Not knowing either of the languages it is impossible for one to judge.

The programme of mime sketches was nearer to average understanding and showed a lack of ideas, despite its visual effects.

"The Parcel" and "The Chair" were refined versions of two clowning acts fit for a circus. In "the constellations" the "audio", effect was greater than the visual impact; characteristically the first item "Magic House" and the last one "Metamorphoses" conveyed little to the uninitiated.

The exceedingly prolonged interval was, in sporting parlance, playing out time. Frankly Marcel Marceau's pure mime show was far more satisfying—one felt that one had had his money's worth.

Exhibitions

BY AN ART CRITIC

THE exhibition at the Calcutta Information Centre organised by the Photographic Association of West Bengal, once more showed that our photographers, by and large, are engaged mostly in the pursuit of the picturesque. For instance, in photographing a pretty girl, they would make her pose, against a pretty background, suitably dressed perhaps to provide a contrast, and the head tilted to catch light at the right places. They forget the simple fact that the same girl, her face sans make-up, snapped unawares, will look infinitely more beautiful with something of her personality thrown in.

Strangely enough when phrases such as candid photography have become threadbare clichés, we still seem to be caught in the groove of arty, salon-photography, circa the thirties. Not that this type of photography—still lifes, natural scenes, flower studies etc.—are not seen elsewhere even now. But their number is small compared to pictures depicting life unvarnished, as it were.

However, amidst the many 'picturesque' photographs, there are here and there, some pictures that bring joy to the viewers. A striking face of a young girl with eyes that look like liquid pools of darkness. Happy faces of children, probably watching the fun at a roadside booth. A dog scavenging for food beside a derelict cast iron seat. And so on. Among the colour transparencies which were shown projected on a screen, most had nothing much to recommend themselves. Only a few flowers and one or two landscapes stood out. One hopes that in future we shall see in exhibitions less studio-type pictures and more photographs depicting life's passing parade. Apart from truth, such pictures have far more beauty than we imagine.

Temperas and Water-Colours

Kunal Kar is very young and a fine painter. His paintings, temperas and

some water colours, were shown at the Academy last week.

Kar chose to exhibit sixteen paintings, and they made a tidy, compact show. The paintings that dominated were six or so large temperas, done in vigorous brush strokes, with patches of blacks, browns and blues.

In some of these, cunning touches of livelier colours helped to impart both strength and beauty. As a water colourist, Kar has already won many awards in leading exhibitions all over the country. The few water colours exhibited showed his control over the medium. One of the most attractive of the water colours was the view of a city, imaginary but not quite. With its ornate buildings, domes and spires, and its winding alley, it evoked visions of some rose-red city in Rajasthan.

Typewritten Portraits

An unusual exhibition, also held at the Academy, showed 'Typo Portraits' by Nirmal Kumar Dutta of Howrah. There were forty-three portraits of great men, living and dead, all done on the typewriter.

As the portraits showed, Dutta has an unbelievable skill in handling a typewriter to draw with photographic fidelity. His technique is first to make a bare outline of the subject. He then puts the paper on the typewriter but does not use the releaser that keeps the paper firm on the roller. Then he taps the keys—letters and numerals, asterisks and ampersands, bars and punctuation signs—and simultaneously shifts the position and angle of the paper as necessary. The strength and weight of the tapping have to be suitably controlled to produce a highlight or a dark patch. Dutta's portraits generally take five to eight hours depending on the complexity of the face and the costume.

Seven Artists

The introduction to the catalogue of

CORRECTION

The Gutenberg exhibition was organised by the West Bengal Master Printers Association in collaboration with the Consulate-General of the Federal Republic of Germany, not the German Democratic Republic.

the show of graphic arts and paintings, held at the Birla Academy from March 14 to 17, flamboyantly asks: will each become a great artist and create a new school some day? The exhibition may be part of the answer".

The exhibition, it is needless to say, gave no indication of either the potential greatness or the trail-blazing possibilities of the five young men and two girls who have formed themselves into a new group called "Transition Seven". If anything, they seem to be too well behaved to be founders of new schools. But the exhibition did show that these artists were all competent, and that's saying a good deal. Their etchings and paintings were all neatly turned out and pleasant to look at—a quality which is becoming increasingly rare in these days of rampant pseudo-abstractions.

The paintings that caught the eye were Akhilendu Bhowmick's study of three musical instruments against a grey background called 'Silent Music', Manjhari Bose's burning Crucifixion, Tina Mehta's First Kiss in warm yellow, orange and green, and Rathin Roy's Experience One. And one of the best in the show was Bagla Charan Deogharia's The Defiants. The decaying walls, the colour of rusting iron, had the majesty of the time-ravaged Purana Quilla in Delhi.

Letters

March 13 and 14

March 13 and 14 have opened a new chapter in our political history and we are left much saner. Only the other day Mr Jyoti Basu and others were eloquent in assuring us that the Naxalites were but a myth and the spectacular victory of the UF had exploded it. But now it appears the Naxalite spectre has grown much too big to leave them in peace. They are swearing openly to raise a one-lakh-strong "volunteer" corps and to arm the faithful with rifles. Who were those people around the University, Hindu Hostel or Coffee House hurling bombs, brandishing knives, beating,

stabbing, snatching and stealing? They were anything but students.

On the 13th at 10 p.m. a pack of some twenty entered the office of *Dakshin Desh*, a Naxalite fortnightly, with bombs, rods and knives. Three workers of *Dakshin Desh* were discussing the day's incidents with one comrade from *Purbadesh* who happened to be there. They were beaten and stabbed, their money, watches and pens were taken? two of them were left groaning with bloody heads and fractured limbs on the floor, and the other two, including the comrade from *Purbadesh*, the Naxalite monthly, were taken away, kept in a den and told that the next day the People's Court (Gana Adalat) would try them. However, the Prisoners managed to escape at 3 while their judges were asleep, tired of the looting and stabbing.

This is only the beginning of a process. The mopping up has just started. In the meantime the People and the 32-Point Programme are all conveniently forgotten

ARUN MISRA
Calcutta

The Calcutta University incidents of March 13 may be deplorable and the death of Krishna Roy is sad and painful, but the role played by the UF Leaders and volunteers in this connection is open to question.

None of the UF Ministers is able to explain why non-student political workers, armed with knives and lathis went there to save the sanctity of educational institutions and liberate the Vice-Chancellor from the gherao. Moreover, the Naxalite demands were termed as 'unjust', but none of them could say what the demands were and why they were unjust.

A spectre of Naxalite-Congress entente is haunting the UF leaders, though the Chatra-Parishad (Student wing of the Congress) has criticised the gherao from the very beginning.

Mr Jyoti Basu told the Students that the unfinished "task" of Krishna Roy should be taken up by them. At the time of Mr Basu's utterance the "task" appeared to have been

accomplished—the V. C. was free from the gherao. So, apart from liberating the V. C., some other task was inflicted upon the poor Krishna and others! Was it to crush the Naxalites who were gaining the support of the Students gradually? By the way, will the Information Minister, Mr Jyoti Bhattacharya, who said that the conscious section (?) of students would be given rifles, if necessary, to combat the Naxalites, fly to New Delhi to see that the Constitution is duly amended?

The Finlay-clad leaders who made the College Square grass wet with their tears had their eyes dry when women and children were killed in Naxalbari. A method to test the genuineness of tears should be invented immediately.

RANJAN GHOSH
Calcutta

The CPI(M) Polit Bureau in its resolution on the recent incidents in and around Calcutta University states, "... On the last 13th March, while the students of Calcutta were fighting for defending their democratic rights, Krishna Roy, a worker of the DYF was killed by the bombs of the Naxalites." It is admitted by almost all the students' organisations, including the CPI(M)'s SF, that the present Calcutta University Students' Union has no right to function. The students of the University have been fighting against the adamant attitude of the Syndicate so that the present unlawful Union is dissolved and fresh election held immediately. It is a democratic movement and nobody can deny it. So, who are the "students of Calcutta fighting for defending their democratic rights"? Obviously the Polit Bureau does not mean the students of the University who were demanding that the Vice-Chancellor should restore democratic functioning of the Union. The Polit Bureau refers to those outsiders who, armed with lathis, swords, bombs etc., attacked the democratic students in the name of rescuing the Vice-Chancellor. The sad death of Krishna Roy was the result of the heinous acts of these

outside goondas, whom the UF Ministers and the CPI(M) leaders are praising to the sky for their "historic" performance.

AMIYA SEN GUPTA
Calcutta

Campus Incidents

It has now become clear why the CPI(M) was so insistent to have the Home portfolio. By neutralising the police they can now instruct their party members and fellow-travellers to take the law into their hands and create a condition of violence to strike terror into the hearts of those who dare to oppose them. This was exactly what happened during the two days (March 13 and 14) in and around the University Campus.

What happened during these two days is to be condemned in no uncertain terms and the death of the young man (no student) is extremely unfortunate. But who was responsible? Certainly the blame would fall squarely on the Home Minister, who is also a Polit Bureau member of the CPI(M), when he excited his followers to start a crusade against the "anti-people" Naxalites and assured them of police non-interference, from the rostrum of the Brigade Parade ground on March 9. The subsequent events clearly demonstrated the effect of his inflammatory speech on his followers.

How could a responsible Home Minister of the Stature of Mr Bose stoop so much at the condolence meeting is incomprehensible. Perhaps, he is dizzy with temporary success, perhaps he thinks that his position has become unassailable owing to his Party's spectacular victory in the election. But he is humbly being reminded that by raising the Naxalite bogey on the one hand and an illusive confrontation with the Centre on the other, the people can be hoodwinked for some time only for very soon, the bluff will be called.

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