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“VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY”

MRS Indira Gandhi is not famed for sharpness of mind and coherent utterances. But what she said about economic co-operation, military alliances etc during her South-East Asia safari may not all have been due to lack of intellectual clarity. One suspects there was a method in the non-sense. It should be clear by now where India is hastening slowly in her foreign affairs—a position of tutelage under super-Powers. Thanks to the Russo-American *druzba*, such prostitution has become respectable. The situation is said to have acquired urgency after the British announced their plan to withdraw from the region, a plan which has made many Asian patriots uneasy and led to a lot of talk about filling the vacuum. But does anybody in his or her senses believe that the good Americans will leave Asia to Asians, that the 7th Fleet will be withdrawn, that there will be no Anglo-American bases in the Indian Ocean? And, for that matter, Russian warships will not be seen there oftener? What the dollar-conscious Americans may be thinking fitfully is to make the Asians fight other Asians. They want it cheap; they want some more client States to gang up against China under a disguise; and the Russians are not too unwilling to lend a helping hand in achieving this historic task. For this, some attention has to be paid first to the economy of the region where guerillas seem to be proliferating.

In the circumstances, the first feelers ought to be about regional economic co-operation. Co-operation between States determined to achieve national honour based on a degree of self-sufficiency is welcome. But there is little evidence of such independence in the region concerned. Some of the States are indeed rather prosperous, basking as they are in the heat of the Vietnam war. Export-import figures for Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand and India show the extent of their crippling dependence on the USA and Britain, and any regional co-operation between them is bound to be suspect. The craze for decontrol in India, following devaluation, at the dictate of the World Bank, the disgraceful protests of Singapore at the proposed British withdrawal, the shock expressed by some at the Johnson 'peace' broadcast—all this reveals the character and class interests of the westernized Asian leaders.

Like the missionaries, hard on whose heels came the armies, economic co-operation in this semi-independent region is likely to be followed by

covert military alliances. Our rulers, however, have not the guts to be frank about the grand design that is unfolding. Mrs Gandhi perhaps blushes when military alliances are mentioned. Wasn't her father opposed to alignment? But Mr Nehru was not always non-aligned. What he said in Malaya, embattled with the guerillas, and in Egypt between 1947-50 gladdened many a diehard. It was after the emergence of Communist China as a neighbour in 1950 that, among other factors, led Mr Nehru to be non-aligned as the best course in those days. Mrs Gandhi, during her recent 'voyage of discovery' echoed her father's pre-1950 vacillation, his fear, and his sneaking desire for a working relationship with an imperial Power. It is a case of retrogression.

Mrs Gandhi began her tour with the theme of economic co-operation. Then came references to the feeling of insecurity in certain countries which might seek some sort of an international guarantee. From the U.N.? No; 'international' was changed to unnamed Powers which might, at the request of client States, decide to give a guarantee. Mrs Gandhi, however, wobbled and confessed that more than external threat, what troubled her was internal subversion. Why then talk of guarantees by an outside Power? What is Mrs Gandhi after? Does she want Green Berets to help her out at a future date in Mizoland, Nagaland, and other restless areas? Burma already is helping to hold the Naga rebels.

And, what sort of honourable co-operation for "peace and prosperity", of Asian presence, does she expect from countries whose troops are indulging in genocide in Vietnam? Why does Mrs Gandhi, in her talks with "men of peace" whom she always discovers in white countries, have to refer only to cessation of bombing of North Vietnam but be quiet about the unspeakable massacre going on in the South? Indians should be ashamed that their Prime Minister has been heaping superlative praise on people who are fighting an Asian country by means that would have made Adolf green with envy.

Uncertainty In North-East

In Assam the APHLC has given notice of direct action which may not remain non-violent throughout, in spite of the hill leaders' intention to keep it so. The threat, dramatically heralded by the APHLC MLAs' resignation from the Assam Assembly, should not have taken the Central and State Governments by surprise. Both asked for it, the Assam Government by its persistent obstruction to any reasonable settlement of the hill people's demands and the Centre by continuing to dither under local pressure. The APHLC had made it known that it would launch its agitation if a clear decision on the reorganization issue was not announced before the end of Parliament's last session. But no decision was taken even afterwards, although senior Central leaders are known to have had a series of discussions on the problem before the Prime Minister's visit to South-East Asia.

What blocked a decision has not been spelt out officially, but enough is known to indicate a new and sharp division in the Central Cabinet on how much can be conceded to satisfy the hill people's aspirations. It is typical that the differences should have been allowed to obstruct progress after the outline of a new reorganization plan did not fully meet the APHLC's demands, but the hill people would perhaps have accepted it as the best available compromise. But the ruling politicians of the Brahmaputra Valley predictably raised objections to some important features of the plan. Equally predictably, the Centre lacked the courage to decide, let alone act, in the face of this resistance. Exactly a similar course had been adopted over the reorganization plan on federal lines, which the Centre had offered the APHLC, which the latter had been persuaded to accept, and which was eventually abandoned because of opposition from the Assam Congress.

There has come about a devious tie-up between the Assam Congress politicians and a section of Central leaders to scuttle the reorganization plan under which the APHLC-dominated hill districts would be a fully auto-

nous unit within the State of Assam. The Brahmaputra Valley would not like to hand over Shillong to the hill people, was unhappy at the prospect of the autonomous unit having a legislature and Council of Ministers of its own, and—most important—would not part with control of law and order in the hill unit. The friends of the Assam Congress in New Delhi opposed the last provision in the name of national security and territorial integrity, as if the kind of police action the Assam Government recently took to put down tribal agitation in Kokrajhar were the best means of keeping the country together and inviolate.

It is not difficult to see what kind of arguments will be advanced by the Assam Congress delegation to New Delhi, which includes some of the most "chauvinistic" elements in the State's plains districts. It is doubtful whether Mrs Gandhi will have the strength and determination, even after her invigorating trip abroad, to ignore them; during the discussions held before she left New Delhi her position appeared particularly vulnerable, and there is little reason to hope that Mr Desai and his friends will be more considerate on her return. Yet all concerned should know that failure to give reasonable satisfaction to the APHLC will engulf the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo hills in the same kind of turmoil that has made a settlement so difficult not only in Nagaland but also in the Mizo hills. New Delhi is now perturbed over the Naga underground's increasing liaison with China and Pakistan, but greater sympathy towards Naga aspirations at an earlier stage would not have made the Nagas so bitterly suspicious of Indian intentions as they are today. Similarly, if the Assam Government had not been consistently hostile to the Mizo Union's demands during the early stages, the Mizo National Front's extremism would have enjoyed less support than it does today. And if extremism gains ground in the districts now dominated by the APHLC, the Bodos of Goalpara or the Ahoms of Sibsagar may well be tempted to follow the example. For all this New Delhi would have only itself to curse.

Lessons Of Krishnagar—1

No amount of sophistry can cloud the fact that the people of Krishnagar have passed severe strictures on the United Front. The lady who had been rejected not merely for the Lok Sabha in 1962 but also for the Assembly in 1967 could not have trounced the UF candidate had not a large section of the electorate turned away from the front, which, in its fourteen months of existence, has successfully projected itself as a quarrelsome, ineffectual group, even if well-meaning.

The performance of the Congress in the by-election appears all the more creditable, because there has been a sharp fall in the number of votes polled. In the general election last year, about 70 per cent of the electorate cast their votes but in the by-election the figure dropped to 54 per cent. The absenteeism has been entirely at the cost of the UF, for in the low voting the Congress has been able to poll about 12,000 votes more than what it could in the general election. Not only have a large number of people who voted for the UF in the general election decided in the mean time that there is nothing to choose between it and the Congress, but a section of them has gone over to the other side in disgust. As a result, the Congress has been able to raise its share of valid votes to 55 per cent from last year's 37 per cent. The UF share, on the other hand, has gone down from 47 per cent to 38 per cent.

The result is actually a reversal of the electorate's verdict last year. In six of the seven base Assembly constituencies the Congress has polled more votes than the UF candidate, though in the general election five of these constituencies had returned non-Congress candidates—three of the Bangla Congress and one each of the CPI(M) and the SSP. Even in the two constituencies which had opted for the Congress then, the candidates of the party had a tough time; one of them won by a margin of about 500 votes only and the other, in a straight contest, by about 3,500 votes. But in the by-election the Congress has secured an overwhelming majority in all the five

rural constituencies; in one of these the Congress candidate got a lead of more than 10,000 votes. The UF fared better in the two urban constituencies; but there also taken together, the Congress polled more votes than the UF. In the solitary Assembly constituency which showed a preference for the UF, the Front's edge over the Congress was a meagre 444 votes; and this same constituency had returned a UF candidate in the general election by a majority of 17,000 votes. The slump in UF popularity has been uniform; it is said that hardly in any of the 500 odd booths the Congress candidate polled less than 100 votes while the UF counted its votes in many in two figures.

It is clear that the massive tide of anti-Congressism which had worked last year's miracle is receding. Not that the Congress, the stinking party it is, has done anything in the mean time to deserve a better turn. It is the failure of the UF which is forcing the people back to the fold of the known devil. Administratively, the UF has not been able to live up to its promises and organisationally, it has not been able to retain the large mass of people who broke away from the Congress last year. The bulk of the anti-Congress votes in the last general election had been cast in favour of the Bangla Congress, and with the disintegration of that party in several areas these votes are returning to the Congress. For all their tall claims, the UF parties have not been able to convert this negative voting into conscious support for them. This is true of Muslim voters of the area also, many of whom, in spite of their traumatic experience of 1965, have voted for the Congress. Absorbed in their petty quarrels, the UF parties did not realise the swift erosion of popular confidence in them. They thought, in the manner of the Congress, that anyone with the UF stamp would be acceptable to the electorate, even if his past was a denial of what the UF professes to stand for. The voters of Krishnagar have rejected the distress choice because the UF parties would not agree on any candidate whose politics was similar to their own. They have made it

known that their loyalty has to be earned and cannot be taken for granted. Krishnagar is a warning which the UF should heed.

Lessons Of Krishnagar—2

A morale-booster is a morale-booster, and the Congress party has every reason to crow over its victory in the Krishnagar by-election. Psephologists will be furiously at work during the next few weeks, analysing trends where perhaps there are none. Mr Atulya Ghosh too will be at work: after all, the Congress organization in West Bengal is still very much under his domain, and the by-election victory ought to restore part of his erstwhile reputation as the Wizard of West Bengal. As to specimens such as Dr P. C. Ghosh and Mr Humayun Kabir, the glee in their hearts at the discomfiture of the United Front is likely to be partly muted by the other realisation, namely, that the Krishnagar success might put ideas in Mr Atulya Ghosh's head: the Congress could perhaps win the mid-term poll even without the assistance of multi-time ratters.

What about the United Front itself? Statements have already been made, particularly by the Right Communists, ascribing the debacle to this or that reason, including the altogether specious one that the minority community did not like the face—or is it the voice—of the UF candidate. You only get the candidate you deserve: the different groups in the Front had really gone to town with their intra—, and extra—, mural bickerings over the choice of a proper candidate for the Krishnagar by-election; inevitably, the final selection was on the criterion of equidistance from the warring constituents. A candidate about whom no particular party felt particular warmth was mainly left to his own devices to forge a victory. In the event, the leaders of the Front grossly overrated the value of their emblem: despite Shri Dharma Vira's gubernatorial pranks, the sponsorship of the United Front does not promise automatic victory, not even in the traditionally anti-Congress areas. This lesson, we

hope, has now been adequately driven home.

The disaster for the United Front has been much more of a general character. Out of the five Assembly constituencies within the Krishnagar Lok Sabha constituency that were won by the UF parties in the 1967 elections, in each of the three where the Bangla Congress was victorious last year the Congress has been restored to majority. Quite obviously, there is no enchantment left in the Bangla Congress. For all one can surmise, outside the district of Midnapore, it has by now perhaps been reduced to just another paper organisation. Since the Congress vote in all these three constituencies has increased, at least some of those who had voted for the Bangla Congress in the fourth General Election must have decided that their particular interests are no longer safe with the United Front. The jotedars have started flocking back home.

But there is more to the by-election results than simply this. The UF candidate obtained almost 1,00,000 votes less than what the successful ULF candidate had obtained in 1967, and this loss of votes is spread across the entire constituency. Weariness with elections cannot be the reason for this phenomenon, for, after all, the votes polled by the Congress have in fact gone up by 12,000. The disillusion is specific, and with reference to the United Front candidate only. It could be that the candidate in particular, being a non-party independent, did not arouse much enthusiasm amongst sympathetically inclined voters; but this reasoning cannot be stretched very far, for the successful ULF candidate last year was a non-party independent too. It is possible to conclude that the UF candidate was drowned—and the electorate did not come forward to save him—perhaps because all passion is spent, and people at large have come to have deep misgivings about the concept of the United Front itself. For example, there is no question that a large number of voters whose sympathies are pronouncedly in favour of the Naxalbari ideologues, decided to sit out the by-election. Yet others may have done so out of a feeling of aghastness

at the unseemly feuds and petty-mindedness which pervaded the UF's way of functioning till the other day. There are grounds for believing that a strong party candidate—perhaps from the CPI(M)—would have been able to get out the voters and prevent the Congress from chalking up a cheap victory. To the theologians of the United Front, to suggest this is heresy, or still worse. They are welcome to stew in their own theology.

Nigerian Knot

The bizarre civil war in Nigeria marches on, mostly unreported but not on that account unbloody by any means. It has become increasingly clear, however, that Biafra is not having the better of the fighting; the fate of Port Harcourt does not appear to have gone in Enugu's favour. It is evident which Nigeria Britain or Russia is helping, although it is significant that in recent weeks Biafra has been recognised by several fellow-African States. Meanwhile the talks in London between Lagos and Enugu came to nothing much, with the British contribution to the nothingness still indeterminate; and the representatives of the two contesting parties are now meeting in Kampala, capital of Uganda.

Britain's involvement in Nigerian affairs has been so deep since Lugard's days that its neutrality between Biafra and Nigeria can easily be suspect. Suspected it has been, sometimes in Enugu but often in Lagos too. Whether Kampala, a lovely city built on seven hills, can keep the British nose out of the current dialogue between Nigeria and Biafra must be open to doubt, for the continuing British role in East Africa receives but intermittent attention, as when Kenyan Indians with British passports were barred from entry into Britain earlier this year. Uganda's ability to play a positive role is not undoubted either. President Milton Obote has his own troubles in his country; and Nigeria belongs to West Africa where the problems are rather different from those of East Africa.

If may, therefore, be that Biafra and Nigeria are now confronted with

each other and have to sort their troubles out on their own. And this may be no bad thing. Perhaps many other international disputes would have been less complicated if not-so-honest brokers had not tried to help. Once it is remembered that all African frontiers are arbitrary, based on which European conquerors could grab how much, there is no reason to think that the borders bequeathed by the departing colonialists are sacrosanct. There is nothing unethical about correcting illogical borders in order to bring about greater tribal cohesion. To take the particular instance of Nigeria, the Hausa and the Ibo and the Yoruba do not have a great deal in common; there are ancient animosities which the British succeeded only in sweeping under the carpet. Federation was Britain's answer, a very tentative one, which could work only if the people of Nigeria as a whole accepted the idea and worked it with fair play. This has not been the case in the past eight years during which the more intelligent have revolted against the more numerous, the latter often taking advantage of its permanent majority in the federal parliament. Biafra may yet see virtue in remaining within the federation, which gains much from its size and population; but it is for Lagos to make clear that federation does not mean domination—and massacre, as of the wounded Biafrans at Port Harcourt.

Gloom In Thailand

A correspondent writes:

Reports that filter through the security walls of that never-never colonized land Siam (which, incidentally, was renamed Thailand, (meaning land of free men) can only add to the gloom prevailing in the 'Free World' over the fate of Vietnam. The indomitable LBJ, however, has never been lacking in heroics designed to boost the sagging morale of his puppets. In Washington early last month he promised the visiting Thai Premier, Thanom Kittikachorn, generous assistance against the "illegal

Communist activities". In spite of the 19-gun salute in Washington and brave words from the "courageous defender of freedom in Asia", as Thanom chose to call Johnson, once back in Bangkok the world looks less secure and less comfortable than it appeared from Capitol Hill. As the correspondent of the *Christian Science Monitor* recently reported from Bangkok, "with Communist terrorists installed in south Thailand and operating throughout considerable areas of northeast Thailand, they have now opened a third front in the mountainous north".

The record of the Communist-led Thailand Patriotic Front which has been fighting since January 1966 for the "overthrow of the fascist dictatorial Government which is subservient to U.S. imperialism" is enough to make the Thai rulers more than uneasy. They have fought so far nearly 800 battles with the Government units and claim to have annihilated nearly 2000 troops. They also shot down 6 Government helicopters and captured many weapons. Of Thailand's 71 provinces 29 today are scenes of widespread guerilla action.

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HOWRAH. 1

Notwithstanding the presence of six giant airbases, 46,000 troops and 7,000 'officials' of the USA and the participation of U.S. personnel in the so-called 'pacification' programme and 'counter-insurgency' operations, the State Department is said to be "desperately determined to avoid the Americanization of the war such as has taken place in South Vietnam." After having burnt their fingers in Vietnam they are perhaps planning to revert to the classic strategy of fighting Asians with Asians. It is interesting to note that in the joint communiqué in which Johnson pledged material aid, training and advice Thanom promised to send immediately the first units of a division of 10,000 Thai troops now being specially trained for Vietnam.

Despite their dismal record in the field the Thai rulers cannot, however, fail to impress the boss at Washington by their sincerity and readiness to learn from the great American example. They are faithfully copying the 'pacification' and 'counter-insurgency' gimmicks perfected by the Americans and this, of course, under the direct guidance of the latter. The Special Forces training camp at Lon Buri is in fact the Thai branch of Fort Bragg. Since January this year they have started burning American style the Thai peasants with napalm. And in their fanatic love for democracy perhaps they outdo their Yankee guru. "There can be no constitution", declared Interior Minister Praphas Charusathien, "until every single Communist has been rounded up". "Suppose the Reds came to the polling places with 20 kilos of gold each", asks the anxious democrat, "what would be the result? When we have a constitution and have held election and this country turns red, will you be satisfied?" By Johnson no! Our only misgiving is whether the country could ever be made so safe and holy a place for his genre of democracy. For, the Patriotic Front subscribe to the dangerous theory which says "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun" and they are getting increasing proof of this theory.

The Utopia Of Nanterre

BIBEK ROY

THE revolution that is beginning will call in question not only capitalist society but also industrial society. The consumers' society must perish of a violent death. The society of alienation must disappear from history. We are inventing a new and original world. Imagination is seizing power". So read a poster pinned to the main door of the Sorbonne during that feverish first "night of liberty" after the capture of that temple of learning. In more ways than one it typifies the mood of the student revolutionaries throughout France.

The Utopia was born, however, not in Paris but in that suburban University of Nanterre, carefully nurtured by Daniel Cohn-Bendit and his comrades. The students, by all conventional standards, should not have complained much. The great General since his assumption of the destinies of the nation, had built many a new university; the educational budget had gone up several times, the number of students swelled more than two and a half times during the last few years, while for the first time perhaps a majority of students received a decent allowance for their maintenance. Yet every passing year the discontent grew instead of abating. There was one element missing in the General's grand scheme: the failure to reckon with the students' urge to live like responsible and respected citizens of the country. Back in the days of the Algerian War, the students belonging to various political parties and factions were debating among themselves curiously over what many outsiders thought was a mere semantic snarl—whether the grants received by a student should not be considered as "wages for the work of studying". Of course de Gaulle would have none of this nonsense; after all, the present generation of students, are they not the veritable children of the new millennium of the Fifth Republic? They may be offered a candy more just to bring them back into good humour,

but all thinking can only emanate from the Elysee Palace or its duly appointed rectors sitting at the helms of the universities.

Even if they imagine themselves to be benevolent fathers, they in reality cared very little for their children. Although the Nanterre lecture rooms had ample space and plenty of sun coming through the large windows, yet the Library facilities were next to nothing. The students' halls were like so many dormitories without any of the cultural amenities that make for integrated communal living. The professors appeared two or three times a week in their magisterial robes; once the lectures were over, they were never to be seen. Practical classes and tutorials were conducted by assistants who hardly knew what was actually taught in the class. Books had to be consulted but they could not be found in the library. The students felt that they were like third-class travellers on a passenger train—they were almost the only "permanent" users of the university facilities, but with no one to look after their problems. Strikes broke out last November, demanding student participation in the management of the University's affairs; they won their case to a large extent with the help of many young professors. But even with the best of intention on the part of the teaching corps, the rigid over-centralized university set-up acted as a brake; for the tiniest details to be changed one has to get the sanction of the Education Ministry in Paris. Issues were thrown back and forth like a shuttlecock between the Faculty, the University and the Ministry.

Vietnam

On the top of it the Vietnam issue came to the surface with an increasing acuteness as the Americans intensified their genocidal acts against the Vietnamese. Numerous committees for Vietnam sprang up all over the country with the support of practically all Leftists with the curious exception of the Communists. Many of these new committees carried on effective propaganda not only on the Vietnam ques-

tion but also on the internal French situation.

The catalytic role of the Vietnam Committees combined with the bitter encounter of the students with administrative feudalism produced a most wholesome situation. Even the moderates began to lose patience, while the radicals now broke into the scene with the force of a tornado. The students in the social sciences and humanities, in particular, called in question the very basis of university education as it was hitherto conceived. They refused to play the roles of the "future managerial cadres, the exploiters, the watchdogs of the bourgeois society or its parasites". Science was no more accepted as neutral, for has it not offered its services to "all the enterprises of oppression and destruction?" In a brief pamphlet called "Why the Sociologists", four sociology students declared war on the "false objectivity" of a science that can discuss society without mentioning politics. The sociologists and their science merely respond to the needs of the capitalist masters; indeed, many students in these branches are later asked to apply their skills to the problems of labour relations or marketing research all to the benefit of a few neo-capitalists. The dilemma of a radical economist is no less acute than that of a sociologist. Even the students of literature ask themselves: What are we going to teach tomorrow's children and how?

From this refusal to accept the existing mores of the academic world the next step is logical. If the prostitution of the university is to be resisted, one must strike at one of its most sensitive roots—the examination system. With all examinations boycotted, the university cannot fulfil its social role. No wonder too that M. Grappin, the Rector of Nanterre, threatened to bring in the gendarmes to force through the examinations. The "handful of provocateurs" turned out to be a frightfully large mass.

The slogan of "No Exams" was not an act of simple nihilism as some have argued. The later capture of university premises at Nanterre, Sorbonne and elsewhere gradually brought to

the fore some of the most original and novel ideas ever voiced in matters of education. The situation could more appropriately be called one of "revolutionary anarchy", the first creative acts of destruction of outmoded authority for the sake of a better future. When the victorious rebels gathered together at the "Che Guevara Hall" of Nanterre, there was a sort of poetic disorder. Laurent Schwartz, the eminent mathematician, and André Gorz, the well-known writer on neo-colonialism, both of them very active members of the Committee for Vietnam, were nevertheless put to ridicule for mumbling some incoherent nonsense on the educational problems; the Communist Deputy Juquin met with no better fate. The student collective then began its own thinking. There were no chairmen, no bureaux to preside over the discussion. Everyone was given a free time to air his or her views; animosities often ran high, for there were Maoists, Trotskyites, Guevarites and a whole host of factions that were until recently at each other's throats. Remarkably enough there were no invectives. At each session between 100 and 800 students listened to long reports on themes like "Critical University", "Revolutionary Struggle of the Students in E. Europe", "Anti-Imperialist Struggle," and discussed them in smaller commissions. At the Sorbonne, the students had night-long sessions on the relation between workers' struggles and students' struggles. True, no labour unions sent their official spokesmen to those debates, but many young workers took an active part. In the same vein, as the Odéon Theatre was captured, it "ceased to be a theatre and became a permanent seat of cultural exchange, contacts between workers and students and uninterrupted meetings".

Despite the obsession with Utopia, students had not lost their sense of realism. Without workers' support the University cannot be transformed. If the distinction between the workers and the students has to be obliterated, the barrier must be broken. Many factory gate meetings were held with the workers. This fraternizing did not earn them any applause from the

dignitaries in the Labour Movement. The Communist daily *L'Humanité* characterized Cohn-Bendit and his associates as "bourgeois insurrectionists", "les fils a papa", and more recently, as "provocateurs".

The following excerpt from the *Economist* of 25 May 1968 gives a vivid account of the official Communist reaction to the student revolutionaries. "With the CGT in control the Leftist students from the Sorbonne could not expect a cordial welcome at the Renault works in the Paris suburb of Boulogne-Billancourt. The shutters were down on the understandable ground that provocation must be avoided. Still, students were cheered by workers standing on the roof and the two sides chatted near the gate well into the night. But when, on the following day, the students' union suggested a big march to the factory the CGT did not conceal its displeasure. Nevertheless a few thousand students came and the discussions in the square outside the plant were significant. The Communists, mobilized for the purpose, repeated the party line about the working class being adult enough not to need lessons from anybody. But they had no answer to student hints that they were scared of a real debate. Most appropriately, the news-item was captioned, "A revolution set alight by students snuffed out by Communists." But the bourgeois weekly was being much too optimistic.

For, none of the initial strikes and seizure of factories were held at the behest of the leathercoats from the CGT; M. Seguy, its General Secretary, admitted it openly in a broadcast on May 20. His organization merely rubberstamped the decisions taken on the field by the young militants. For a whole week after Sud-Aviation workers had given the lead on May 13, no preparations for a general strike were made, although Comrade Seguy was confident of a majority backing. Once the call was given and the Communists had relented their opposition, an avalanche of strikes and takeovers spread across the country. Even then the CGT or the CP were not—and are not—thinking of a political takeover; they put forward instead a series of

rather stiff economic demands on wages, working hours, social security and retirement age. Now that the Government has been forced to accept most of these, the CGT is very happy and is recommending an end to the strike.

The ex-Catholic CFDT which has been greatly influenced by 6 left-wing Catholic intellectuals, specially those connected with the well-known *Esprit* group, has refused to be an accomplice of the Communist *capitulards*. They have instead raised the slogan of workers' control over industry which implies in effect not old-fashioned nationalization, but socialization of industry. Along with the CFDT, M. Mendés-France's Left Socialist PSU and the UNEF, presently controlled by PSU militants, have thrown in their whole weight behind the political struggle. In a memorable speech on May 19 Mendés-France paid unstinted tributes to the young workers who joined hands with the students to "reawaken the nation". And when, finally, de Gaulle's Government banned all processions in Paris from May 27, and when, with a slight variation of the theme, the obedient CP warned that any demonstration would be an act of provocation, the CFDT, PSU, UNEF, FO and a number of other organizations led by Mendés-France defied the ban. Similarly the striking workers have so far dealt a resounding rebuff both to their erstwhile leaders from CGT and to the government of de Gaulle.

None of this was unexpected. Conscious of their limitations the student leaders had taken to unusual tactics right from the beginning. By systematically provoking the Government and its agents, by using the classic arms of dialectics, violence or even buffoonery, they had wanted to expose the inherent contradictions of existing society and thus hasten its disintegration. At every critical point the authorities must be goaded into taking a strong line which will then be used to force the hands of the reluctant Communists and drag them into the struggle for political power. So far they have succeeded extremely well and their Utopia is still a living child.

On Marx

MONITOR

THIS year the world observes the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Karl Marx's birth. On this occasion—in the midst of widespread distortion of Marxism, of attempts to present Marx as a garden liberal—it is proposed, *first*, to make a very brief review of the basic tenets of Marxism with reference to its sources, *secondly*, to analyse some important trends in historical development and the corresponding development of Marxism during this period and, *thirdly*, to refer to some of the most important issues raised in the controversy between Marxism and revisionism in the contemporary international working class movement.

I

MARXISM arose by absorbing critically all that was best in the three great trends in European thought—German and French Philosophy, English and French Political Economy, English and French Socialism.

A

The central question of philosophy is the question of the relation of matter to spirit, of being to thinking. Philosophers have been divided into two great camps according to the answer they gave to this fundamental question. Those who have asserted the primacy of being over thinking, of matter over spirit have been called materialists while those who have asserted the contrary have been known as idealists. Marx of course was a materialist. Though pre-Marxist materialism has a long history, those who most significantly influenced Marx and (Engels) in this regard were the eighteenth-century French philosophers and Feuerbach.

Pre-Marxist materialism reached its high water mark in the writings of those French philosophers who were great fighters against all sorts of mysticism as well as against the Church,

the absolute monarchy and those institutions that supported the feudal social structure in eighteenth-century France. They were the famous Encyclopaedists headed by the great Diderot who, according to Lenin, came very close to the standpoint of contemporary (i.e. dialectical) materialism.¹ This materialism, however, suffered from two grave defects which Marx and Engels later criticized.² Its first defect was that it was *mechanical* in the sense that it judged everything according to the laws of the science of mechanics. It considered the movement as a mere mechanical movement thinking that the same events would always reproduce themselves. In a word, it saw only the mechanical and not the living side of things. This limitation was, however, inevitable because, at that time, only mechanics, of all natural sciences, had come to any definite shape. The second defect of this classical French materialism was a direct consequence of the first. This materialism did not recognize the universe as a process, as matter undergoing historical development. This constituted its *metaphysical*, that is, anti-dialectical side. This was also inevitable in the context of the relative backwardness of natural science in that epoch.

Marxist materialism could arise only on the solid foundation laid by the scientific progress in the beginning of the nineteenth-century, specially in three directions—the living cell, the transformation of energy and the Darwinian theory of evolution.³ Given this objective basis it was Feuerbach who exerted the most immediate influence on young Marx and Engels in the direction of materialism. In an article written in 1842⁴ Feuerbach posed the basic question of philosophy almost in the same terms as those that Engels used later, that is, the question of the relation of thinking to being [Die Frage nach dem Verhältnis des Denkens zum Sein]⁵—and answered that being determines thinking and not thinking being. Feuerbach arrived at this conclusion through a criticism of Hegel's idealism. This central proposition of Feuerbach had a profound influence on Marx and

Engels and served as the foundation of their own philosophy. But Marx and Engels did not accept Feuerbach uncritically. First of all they pointed out that Feuerbach was not a consistent materialist. Feuerbach showed his idealism in his treatment of religion and ethics.⁶ Secondly, even in his materialism Feuerbach conceived of reality or sensuousness as merely an object and not as a human, sensuous activity, practice [menschliche sinnliche Tätigkeit, Praxis]⁷. In his criticism of Feuerbach Marx made the famous statement that the materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances forgets that it is men who change circumstances⁸. The defects of Feuerbach's materialism arose out of his inadequate appreciation of dialectics. Marx and Engels while rejecting Hegelian idealism accepted Hegelian dialectics, that is, the doctrine of development through contradiction, free of one-sidedness—a development, moreover, that includes sudden changes and leaps in nature and history⁹. Needless to say Marx put dialectics on a firm materialist foundation, accepting its 'rational kernel' while throwing away the Hegelian 'mystical shell'¹⁰.

Historical materialism is the application of dialectical materialism to the study of history. By rejecting all arbitrariness and chaos in the explanation of historical development Marx put history on a sound scientific foundation. Historical materialism holds that the chief factor that accounts for social change is the production and reproduction of material life, in other words, the way men procure their means of life. The method of procuring the means of life implies two kinds of relations for men, namely, the relation between men and nature, and the relation of men to one another. From the first kind of relations arise the forces of production that include the inanimate instruments of production as well as the people who work with them. These forces of production in their turn condition the second kind of relations known as relations of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitute the economic structure of society on which rises the legal and political super-

structure¹¹. In both cases, of course, the relationship is *reciprocal*. That is, first, the production relations being determined by the forces of production do influence these forces in their turn and secondly, the economic structure while determining the legal and political superstructure is itself influenced by the latter.

B

Marx's economic analysis is a direct consequence of his world outlook and can be fully understood only in the context of that outlook. According to historical materialism, we know, social changes are caused, *on the whole and ultimately*, by the changes in the relations of production which, again, correspond to the state of productive forces at a given epoch. The changes in the relations of production proceed dialectically and are epitomized by the class-struggles. Thus ultimately class-struggles constitute the motive force of historical change. This conception of history is the clue to Marx's theory of value which is the point of departure, as it were, of the Marxian analysis of the "laws of motion of capitalism".

As in philosophy, so also in economics, Marx took over from his predecessors all that was the best in their writings. The starting point of Marx's theory of value is the so-called labour theory of value propagated by the classical economists. According to this theory commodities exchange for one another in proportion to the amount of labour that their production costs. As soon as the classical economists formulated this law they, however, came up against a contradiction. If commodities are exchanged as equivalents against equivalents in proportion to the amount of labour contained in them how can there arise a profit for the capitalists who do not contribute labour to production? The earlier economists could not solve this contradiction satisfactorily. Marx's solution to this contradiction is related to the very character of the capitalist mode of production. This mode of production is characterized by the existence of two principal classes—on the one hand the capitalists possessing

the means of production and on the other the mass of workers dispossessed of these very means of production and having nothing but their labour-power to sell. Now the value of a commodity is determined by the socially necessary labour time embodied in its production. Labour-power itself being a commodity its value is also determined in the same way. That is, the value of labour-power during a certain period of time is determined by the amount of subsistence necessary for the maintenance of this labour-power. But unlike any other commodity labour-power has this unique property—its use is a source of new value, that is, its utilisation occasions a value greater than its own value. Thus the workers working under the capitalists not only reproduce the value of their labour-power, for which they are paid, but, in addition, they also produce a *surplus value* for which they are not paid. This surplus value giving rise to profit and other incomes of the capitalists and non-labouring classes becomes the basis of the exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. Marx's analysis thus "removed the last ground for all the hypocritical phrases of the possessing classes to the effect that in the present social order right and justice, equality of rights and duties and a general harmony of interests reign, and the present-day bourgeois society, no less than its predecessors, was revealed as a grandiose establishment for the exploitation of the huge majority of the people by a small, ever-diminishing minority [Ausbeutung der ungeheuren Mehrzahl des Volkes durch eine geringe und immer kleiner werdende Minderzahl]"¹².

The capitalist mode of production, Marx pointed out, simultaneously reproduces the capital of the capitalists and the poverty of the workers. What is more, the "accumulation [of capital] reproduces the capital-relation—that is, the relation of capitalists on the one hand and wage-workers on the other—on a progressive scale, more capitalists or larger capitalists at this pole, more wage-workers at that. . . . Reproduction of labour-power forms an essential of the reproduction of

capital itself. Accumulation of capital is, therefore, increase of the proletariat [Akkumulation des Kapitals ist also Vermehrung des Proletariats]"¹³. This increase of the proletariat is further enhanced by the technological tendencies inherent in capital accumulation—by the replacement of men by machines. However the simultaneous accumulation of capital and of a surplus working population together in the end "makes a social upheaval necessary, on the one hand, and possible on the other"¹⁴.

C

Under the shadow of the great bourgeois revolution in France and the industrial revolution in England and along with the increasing misery of the proletariat—parallel with the development of capitalism—arose a series of thinkers who envisaged the future of human society in terms of equality, brotherhood and universal happiness. The most important among them and immediately preceding Marx and Engels were Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen. What was common to them was that they did not consider themselves as representatives of the proletariat which had already appeared on the historical scene. For them there was no question of emancipating the proletariat alone as a first step to the emancipation of humanity as a whole. Like the French philosophers of Enlightenment they thought that they represented the cause of humanity as a whole¹⁵. To all of them, however, the bourgeois world appeared as unjust and irrational and they were greatly disturbed by the growth of inequality, the continuing impoverishment of the working class and the accumulation of riches by the capitalists. Compared with the splendid promises of the philosophers of Enlightenment the social and economic reality born of the "triumph of Reason" was thoroughly disappointing and these early socialists gave full vent to this feeling. Carried away by their indignation at the exploitation of the masses by the capitalists they wrote about the need for the refashioning of society and produced a number of brilliant

conjectures regarding the communist society of the future. But brilliant though their thoughts were in many respects these were largely determined by the crude conditions of capitalist production prevailing at that time and the crude class conditions corresponding to them. In particular these socialists could not understand the laws of capitalist development. Eager though they were to create a social order which would contain no poor, rich, slaves or masters the solution they offered were unscientific precisely because they failed to discern the force capable of radically changing the present-day capitalist society—that is, the working-class. They failed to understand that it is through the class struggles leading to the revolutionary overthrow of the possessing classes by the proletariat that a radically new social order, a juster and more rational social order, can come about. In a word they were largely visionaries and ignored the scientific laws of social development. Hence they were called *utopian socialists*. While holding them in great respect Marx and Engels also severely criticised them for these shortcomings and thereby transformed socialism from utopia to science. In contrast to the utopians who wanted to change the existing social order independently of the existence of material conditions for such a change Marx and Engels held that one could not simply wish away a social order however undesirable it might have been. Only when the objective conditions for a change had matured in the womb of the old society that it could yield place to the new. Marx and Engels put socialism on a scientific foundation by discovering the "economic laws of motion of capitalism" and demonstrating how capitalism would yield place to socialism once the material conditions for such change had matured. Above all they showed that the emancipation of the workers is a matter for the workers themselves; it can be brought about neither as a readymade solution from the heads of some 'great men' nor through the 'peaceful' and 'harmonious' path of class-collaboration. The workers can emancipate themselves only through the fierce class

struggles leading to the violent overthrow of bourgeois property relations.
(To be concluded)

Peking, Hanoi, Paris

D. G. SATARKAR

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PRIME Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi commenting on the selection of Paris as the venue for the Vietnam talks, had said that India herself had suggested Paris and that she was happy that an initial hurdle was over. She also expressed the confidence that "peace" would finally come to Vietnam. Mrs Gandhi was not alone in expressing this sentiment. There were a host of statesmen around the world who said more or less the same thing. Our newspapers also welcomed the prospect of "peace" in Vietnam. They are all happy that the talks have begun. Everybody today seems to long for peace and to hope that this cruel war will somehow be over.

The only people who do not seem to share this general enthusiasm about peace are the Chinese. We are repeatedly told that China is grossly unhappy over Vietnam's readiness to talk with the Americans. Some have in fact discovered that the Government in North Vietnam may not after all be a Chinese satellite and, with the confidence of men who know, some have emphasised that Xuan Thuy, the chief Vietnam negotiator in Paris, is in reality a pro-Moscow man. It would seem that the Peking-Hanoi break is complete and that it is Peking which does not want a settlement in Vietnam. Some of our newspapers have even suggested that New Delhi was not accepted by North Vietnam as a neutral site for talks because China would have taken offence, implying quite obviously, that everybody else, except of course the intransigent Chinese, is quite ready to accept New Delhi's pretensions to neutrality and non-alignment. What is more, we are asked to believe that, Hanoi would not have had any objection to a capital which undertook not to trade with Hanoi for a few quintals of wheat. Likewise one Indian newspaper attributed Hanoi's reluctance to talk on an Indonesian ship to China's pressure. It makes plausible reading except that it is stretching credulity too far to believe that but for China's

pressure, Hanoi would consider the Suharto regime as non-aligned or neutral. What makes anybody in this country believe that Hanoi's understanding of the international situation is so poor that it takes China's pressure for it to reject New Delhi or an Indonesian ship as unacceptable venues for talks is difficult to understand. Yet this was precisely what was being churned out of the presses of India. The general argument was that Hanoi is keen on peace but Peking is not. Hanoi would have loved to negotiate in Delhi but Chairman Mao would not permit it to and there are suggestions that Peking would reject all compromise even if it were acceptable to Hanoi.

What is China's attitude to peace in Vietnam? This is really the crux of the problem. All India Radio has assured us that "nobody except China will be anxious to continue to fight". AIR further advised Ho to "resist such pressure, end the war and rebuild its economy in peace". This means that Peking is really determined that the war should go on for its own sake and that it is not interested in achieving anything through peace and negotiations. What is the reality? What has been Peking really saying about the talks? It has undoubtedly said very little about the negotiations but it has said a lot about American withdrawal. This raises another question: what do we mean by peace? What does Hanoi mean by peace? Our Government presumably does not mean anything so specific as complete American withdrawal from Vietnam. What it means or rather hopes is probably that the negotiations would somehow produce a miracle which would save the embarrassment that the continuing and escalating Vietnamese war has caused to its non-aligned pretensions. There should be no difficulty in seeing that Hanoi's concept of acceptable peace would quite naturally be different from this. Agreeing to talk with the Americans in response to President John-

son's March 31 speech, Hanoi Radio said :

The USA must bring its aggressive war in Vietnam to an end, withdraw all U.S. and satellite troops from South Vietnam and let the Vietnamese people settle themselves the internal affairs of Vietnam.

The Vietnamese people have not been fighting all this long for unqualified peace or settlement. Peace will have to come and it will come but it will be a follow-up of American withdrawal. All India Radio has described the North Vietnamese leaders as the ones "who also realise the futility of war." What it did not say was that they are also the ones who not only realise but also have experienced the futility of certain kinds of peace. Twice they were offered a kind of peace in Vietnam once immediately after the war and later in 1959 and twice they have rejected it. If the peace-seekers of today were to force a compromise settlement on them for the third time, they will reject it once again. Whether the Vietnamese negotiator is pro-Moscow or pro-Peking (what does that mean anyway?) it makes little difference. What is at issue is not war or peace but rather the American withdrawal and the unification of Vietnam. Whether this objective will be achieved through war or peace or both is a question to be best determined by the Vietnamese people.

"Fraud"

It is against this background that China's comment on the Vietnamese negotiations should be seen. The Chinese have described the "peace talks" proposal as a "political fraud". They have quoted Dean Rusk as saying that if the talks were to fail the USA would conduct "even more serious fighting". In other words China is convinced that these peace talks proposals are a 'hoax'. The United States is not yet ready to leave Vietnam. China believes that "the fundamental aim of U.S. Imperialism is to divide Vietnam permanently and occupy South Vietnam forever". It has reiterated this belief in its short comment on the Johnson proposals. Those who might think that this pronounce-

ment on U.S. intentions is too dogmatic should only look at what happened in Korea. After two long years of negotiations Korea was divided as ever, with little hope of unification. U.S. troops in Korea do not seem to have any intention of leaving the peninsula. Now the question is, why should the Vietnamese accept any peace if it means permanent partition? If China's angry diatribes mean anything they mean a stern opposition not to peace but to the American presence. The short Chinese statement has been very insistent that fighting will have to continue. Talks may go on. In fact nowhere does China's statement categorically say that Hanoi should not talk. All that it says is that fighting will have to continue and that the talks alone would lead Vietnam nowhere.

All poetry about peace apart, the relevant question is whether this should be interpreted to mean that China is opposed to any kind of peace in Vietnam : or more precisely, is China opposed to a peace which is acceptable to the Vietnamese people ? On this point China's only statement on negotiations is not very ambiguous. What it fears is that the peace talks are *not* about American withdrawal. It is absolutely necessary that the Americans should be "forced out" of South Vietnam. If Korea is any guide, if the Geneva Conference on Vietnam and its aftermath do show a certain pattern of behaviour on the part of the U.S., China may well be right.

In any case that is yet to be decided. China, for all her sound and fury, is yet to be proved wrong. This is not to say that it will never be. This is only to point out, in the midst of negotiations euphoria, that historically speaking China has a very valid point. Besides, China's continuous shouting against the U.S. presence in Vietnam may in fact be helpful to the negotiating Vietnamese in Paris. Somebody has to keep reminding the Americans that the old tricks would not work again, some other socialists should have done this. It is a pity that China has to do it all alone. However the point is that on a tactical plane Peking's apparent intransigence may

in fact be an asset to the Vietnamese. For, we must remember that what the Vietnamese are seeking is not only peace but also freedom for themselves and there can be no compromise when it comes to freedom, as Ho Chi Minh made it clear in a recent broadcast. That is the reason why Peking Radio came out with the confident prediction that "the Vietnamese people . . . will certainly drive away every single U.S. aggressive gangster from their sacred soil." There is no reason to believe that China would not like to see this happen through negotiations. It is only that China thinks that this may not be possible through negotiations. It is for the United States to prove her wrong.

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Her Two Faces

FROM A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

OUR Prime Minister seems to cling still to the worn out motto: "In Rome do as Romans do." Judging by her statements during her current visit to South-East Asia, one may be excused if one thinks that she was perfectly identifying herself with the spirit of the U.S. puppet regimes there. It is difficult to find in her the Mrs Gandhi who with Kosygin only a few days ago demanded the U.S. should stop bombing in Vietnam. Obviously that stance at that particular moment was paying. Adoption of an opposite posture without any moral qualms at another place and time apparently suits India's policy of non-alignment.

Otherwise how could one explain the absence of any reference to Vietnam in her statements or the joint communiques she has been signing during the South-East Asian sojourn barring a single innocuous sentence welcoming the peace talks. After going through the acres of meaningless verbiage of her speeches, one is left wondering whether Vietnam is outside the zone.

The reason for this careful silence on the Vietnam issue is not far to seek. To the ruling coterie of the countries she is visiting now, North Vietnam and the NLF are an anathema. No wonder, eager to respect their feelings and thereby to prove to the USA that India is still her friend, she has conveniently shed the anti-imperialist role and taken up the anti-Chinese stance. She seems to be more eager now to reassure her South-East Asian neighbours of India's anti-Communist policy. The familiar slogan of defending the Himalayas, the old slanders against the Indian Communists have made their reappearance. She seems to have her arsenal ready with all sorts of platitudes—anti-imperialist and socialist to suit Kosygin, or anti-Chinese and anti-Communist to please the U.S. puppets.

But it is about time the Soviet Union shed its illusions about Mrs Gandhi, particularly after her latest performance in Australia. She has welcomed Australia's growing interest in South-East Asian affairs and has gone to the extent of recognizing it as a regional Power. In other words, the presence of Australian troops in any S. E. Asian country should not be regarded as aggression. What else could be a cleaner chit than this to the U.S. policy of employing Australian mercenaries to carry on the dirty war in Vietnam? At a time when public opinion even in Australia is raising its voice against the deployment of Australian troops in Vietnam, Mrs Gandhi chose to go out of her way to pay compliments to the Australian ruling clique for its role in South-East Asian politics.

While the Prime Minister is busy abroad rehabilitating herself in the anti-Communist circles, developments within India are moving towards a critical stage. All the myths of a split in the Naga underground, meticulously built up by the Home Ministry for consumption by Delhi's gullible journalists, were exploded a few days ago, when the underground unanimously agreed to take arms from China to fight the Indian Government.

Mr Kughato Suhai, the Naga underground leader, who was being pictured by the Home Ministry for some time past as the head of the anti-Chinese faction among the underground, was reported to have announced at the recent meeting of the underground that he was against Communists, but the Indian Government's stiff attitude towards the Naga demand for independence had driven him towards the Chinese. He also paid back the Indian Government in its own coin when he said that since India had no hesitation in getting arms from America or the Soviet Union to fight others, why should the Nagas refuse to be armed by China? He was further reported to have ridiculed India's fear about Communist China. Since India was claiming to build socialism and since Communism was the next step forward why should she be afraid of a country building communism?

Mr Suhai cannot be blamed. We here remember how he and his team were snubbed by the Prime Minister when they came here for talks last year. After fixing an appointment and keeping the team waiting in anxious expectation, she chose to cancel it on some flimsy ground. She possibly assumed, true to the Nehru tradition, that she could afford to ignore a small fry like the Naga underground. It is said that Nehru in a similar fashion, immediately after August, 1947, dismissed a delegation of young Nagas who came to see him with the request for a separate Naga State. The attitude still persists and is fast leading the country to disintegration.

Assam

Almost a similar pattern of developments is taking place with regard to the Assam reorganization problem. The hill leaders were assured in the past of a separate hill State or a federation. They waited patiently for the Congress High Command to settle its differences with the Assam Congress. After a series of exasperating meetings, the reorganization formula was almost finalized and waited approval of the Cabinet last week. The Deputy Prime Minister chose the 11th hour however to oppose the formula. As Mrs Gandhi's need to woo her South-East Asian neighbours was more pressing, the decision on Assam reorganization was deferred till her return. It is rumoured that even after her return, there will be attempts to shelve it. If after this the hill people in despair give way to the pressure of those who are branded as "extremists," and take to the path of the Nagas and the Mizos, can we blame them any more?

Plan

As expected the National Development Council, meeting here from May 17-18, gave the green signal to the Planning Commission to begin the Fourth Plan formulations. But the NDC failed to come to grips with the fundamental factors standing in the way of the implementation of any plan, however socialistic it might be. The question of breaking the influence of the vested interests was slurred over.

Mr Namboodiripad's was the sole voice which brought up the question. Although the Kerala Chief Minister's note criticizing the Planning Commission's document on the Approach to the Fourth Plan, contained a sketch of an alternative plan, in the present circumstances, such an attempt is reduced almost to a regular ritual. A Communist representative on any national body is duty bound to expose the lapses of a government run by vested interests and to provide an alternative plan, without realizing that the criticisms fail to make any impact on the thick-skinned gathering. Suggestions of reforms within the static framework of the present-day Indian society are futile. Mr Namboodiripad bewailed at the NDC meeting that the word 'socialism' did not occur in the Planning Commission document. He feared that the Government had forgotten its professed objective of socialism. Did he ever have any illusion about the Government's seriousness about the professed objective?

Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

THE consumer always pays through his nose in a capitalist society and this is particularly true in India in spite of all talk of a "socialistic pattern of society" by the Congress. Willy nilly, therefore, the people at large are caught in a cleft stick from which there is no easy escape. Any movement for some relief from the mounting misery due to the high cost of living, if successful, is only at the cost of the consumer. Which is only another way of saying that the different sections of militant workers and employees are gaining only at the expense of each other and not at the cost of the employers as it should be.

From present indications, the strike of cinema employees which is now nearing 2½ months may be settled only by the imposition of a surcharge of 10 paise per entry, thus increasing the expenses of the cinema-goers while

leaving the profits of the exhibitors, distributors and producers untouched. This may perhaps explain people's apathy to the continued closure of cinemas. Incidentally, it is a significant pointer to our achievements after 21 years of independence, that all the foreign-owned cinema halls or those showing foreign films are exempted from the strike since their pay scales happen to be what at best the striking employees hope to get. So much for independence and indigenous as against the foreign exploiter.

An interesting offshoot of the strike has been the demand for compulsory time to be given to Bengali films. It is of course unfortunate that Bengali films should find release difficult but I suspect films which never see the light of the projector are not rare wherever films are made. Nor are there too many films here which could not be released merely for the want of a willing exhibitor. The trouble often lies elsewhere. There have been instances when Bengali films were prevented from release by injunctions from the High Court brought by one of the producers. In spite of all that has been said for and against the proposal, nothing will be solved by allotting time compulsorily. No doubt the example of Maharashtra is there; but then Maharashtra is also the land of the hated Shiva Sena. Bengal need not look to Bombay to show the way to salvation. A more vital issue is at stake, which progressives in the Bengali films might do well to ponder. If they are to depend on Government props for mere existence, how long will they be able to resist covert or overt attempts to influence their productions? Dependence on the Establishment and independence of thought do not exist side by side.

The trouble with the Bengali film industry lies elsewhere as divined by Director Mrinal Sen. The crisis is intellectual. It is frequently said that the industry was crippled by the loss of the East Pakistan market after partition. But the population of West Bengal is now roughly 4 crores. If this population cannot sustain the industry, nothing else will.

Unfortunately the Bengali film is not

made for all Bengalis. The Bengali film is made by and for the Bengali middle class, large sections of which have changed their tastes. As for the largest sections of Bengali society, the rural and semi-rural populations, the intellectual exercises which often pass for good film entertainment, just leave them cold. It is interesting to note that a film like *Charulata* over which Calcutta critics raved could run only three days to empty houses in nearby Barasat.

If the Bengali film industry is to survive and prosper, it is necessary, that it should seek out the causes for its stagnation within its own self. Guaranteed runs in empty houses are not likely to be a very comfortable solution. The public can always stay away from the films it does not like and in any case who are the producers, directors, and others controlling the industry to say which films the people should or should not see? As for the exhibitors, if they are to show indifferent films and face a loss, they will try to pass on the burden either to the workers or, failing this, to the public, one way or the other. If they fail in this, they can shut down their business and take to something else and no one can prevent it. At a pinch, I was told by a friend from the mofussil, any cinema-house owner can convert it practically overnight with a few airconditioning units into a cold storage, the demand for which seems unlimited, and makes a good income without bothering about the tastes of the public and needs of the industry.

And finally, another thing the sponsors of protection for Bengali films might do well to remember is this: a large number of film people from Bengal, as indeed from other parts of the country, are reaping a big bonanza from films made in Bombay and to some extent in Madras. It is quite on the cards that any such protectionist policy might directly or indirectly rebound on them forcing them to try the home market again for their talents. The fresh competition from these personalities may not be exactly healthy for the industry.

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Bandh In France

COMMENTATOR

NEWSPAPERS were prompt last week in doling out sympathy in generous measures to the students and workers of France agitating against the ten-year old regime of President de Gaulle. The intrusion of the police in the Sorbonne, their high-handedness in dealing with student demonstrators, and the outmoded educational system, unchanged since Napoleon's reforms, have all been roundly condemned. One wonders where all this liberalism of Indian papers vanishes suddenly when dealing with parallel or near-parallel situations at home. The papers which have held police action against students responsible for the countrywide strike in France did not think it necessary to condemn police action in Uttarpara College or the wanton intrusion of the police in educational institutions in Calcutta and elsewhere. Nor have the papers found anything wrong in students making political demands and the students' agitation rapidly developing into a countrywide movement against the regime. No holy horror has been expressed at students participating in politics; no gratuitous advice that they should keep away from it. On the contrary, there is an ill-concealed glee at the situation precipitated by the students and a hope that President de Gaulle may at last be cut down to size. In this the papers are in tune with the reaction in Britain and the USA which have their own reasons for rejoicing over President de Gaulle's discomfiture. Why Indian papers should share in that is difficult to understand; perhaps it shows to what extent they allow themselves to be influenced by Anglo-American thinking.

In a dispatch from Paris in *The Times of India* Dileep Padgaonkar writes that with the "occupation" of their faculties complete, students have proclaimed the autonomy of the Sorbonne. In this frenetic ambience where hysteria and discipline, debate

and demagogy, ardour and doubt, go hand in hand there is unanimous insistence only on one count: the old and outdated university pattern must go. For the students the issue is clear: their university education only prepares them to be cogs in the neo-capitalist wheel, assuring them a decent, material life. This they categorically refuse. One poster in the courtyard of the Sorbonne stressed their case in a particularly lyrical vein. "The consumer society must die a violent death", it said. "The society of alienation must die a violent death. We want a new and original world. We refuse a world where the certitude of not dying of hunger is exchanged for the risk of perishing with boredom". Padgaonkar says that the Communist Party particularly is in disarray. Its daily organ, *L'Humanite*, first condemned the student movement as a frivolous and useless agitation led by a tiny "Maoist, adventurist, and Trotskyist group". Later, when the movement attained gigantic proportions, the refrain was different. They not only sympathised with the students but agreed to participate, together with their trade unions, in a massive protest demonstration jointly sponsored by students and workers. Peking's joy over the new developments has not gone unnoticed. But even there it is realised that the "cultural revolution" on the banks of the Seine has quite different accents from those in China. The French brand is inspired not only by Mao, but by Marx and Lenin, Castro and Ho Chi Minh, Herbert Marcuse and Wilhelm Reich, Fanon and Che Guevara. Besides, Mao's moral strictures find no echo here and recent developments in "revisionist" Prague are acclaimed. No one really ventures a reply to how long the agitation will last. Only two things are certain. One, the old, haggard Sorbonne will no longer be the same again. Two, Paris is still, and contrary to all attempts at demystification, a "movable feast".

The Hindu is convinced that the Fifth Republic is set for a big change. Riots may be nothing new to France whose volatile people have always shown a predilection for the street as

an arena for protest. But the disturbances of the past fortnight have been of such intensity and depth that the question is being asked if France is heading for a revolution. For the past ten years, France has enjoyed relative political stability and prosperity, with General de Gaulle playing the great white father. But apparently below the surface has been simmering frustration and disappointment over the results of ten years of paternalistic and authoritarian rule. The General's grandiose efforts to restore France to all its old glory certainly caught the public imagination at first. But with growing unemployment and declining living standards, the popular mood has changed. The students' revolt proved to be all the spark that was needed to set public discontent on fire. Apart from the students wanting an overhaul of the entire educational system—and they have good reason to ask for it because the French universities have shown themselves inadequate to cope with the needs of their 600,000 students—the people as a whole are asking for a change and for a greater voice in the affairs of the State. Whether this revolutionary situation can be contained will largely depend on how far General de Gaulle will go to meet the people's wishes. He has now promised some reforms but unless he also voluntarily sheds at least a good part of the personal power he now enjoys, he may be in for more trouble and France for more turmoil.

"Against Gaullism"

The Indian Express thinks it is on Gaullism and all that it has come to represent in their eyes that the anger and hostility of the youth of France are concentrated. The restiveness of the youth the world over stems from the yawning gulf which divides them from their elders. Paternalism is as much a bad word in their vocabulary as regimentation. The two are focussed and fused in Gaullism as France's angry young men view the past ten years of the General's paternal regimented rule. De Gaulle, with what they term his discredited bourgeois ideas and outlook, the priority he gives to order and obedience above

justice, has become a malevolent father figure which they already identify with the image of their own parents and elders. Never has the gap dividing the generations been so wide and so dangerous. France's young men, along with their counterparts in many countries of the world, are disillusioned and disenchanted. What is happening in France could be a portent and a warning. In the eyes of the young, the generation of their elders is antiquated in mind, body and spirit. Perhaps it is not without significance that the university students of Paris and their younger professors are engaged primarily in a demonstration against an antiquated system of education. Here is a portent and warning strikingly relevant to India.

Krishnagar

The defeat of the United Front in the parliamentary by-election in Krishnagar has been interpreted by most papers as a sign of the Front's decline. The only conclusion that appears to *The Statesman* is that the United Front, more specifically its major leftist constituents, has lost much of its influence in the area. And this may not be untrue of what has happened elsewhere in West Bengal. The inherent weaknesses of this disparate alliance have been increasingly exposed to the public ever since it was pushed into office by a massive wave of anti-Congress feeling. The process continues, in spite of the rather comical effort by the two main constituents to hide their differences; if anything, the joint statement issued by the West Bengal BKD and CPI(M) may only have convinced the public that they do not have enough courage to own up the differences honestly. The Congress could take decisive advantage of growing public impatience with an alliance of expediency, but its own internal differences are perhaps no less serious than the United Front's, its organisational weaknesses no less harmful. Under honest and purposeful leadership, Krishnagar could stimulate the corrective processes which have been deferred so long.

The Times of India thinks that the Congress has been able to win back

the support of the rural voters which it had lost in 1967. It is also possible that the Muslim voters who made all the difference to the fate of the parties in the crucial southern and eastern districts of the State in 1967 are no longer enamoured of the United Front. Whatever the reasons for the Congress victory, it is bound to affect the forthcoming mid-term election in the State. The State Congress President has already claimed that the result of this by-election is an indicator of the way the wind is blowing in the State. Unless the Congress becomes utterly self-complacent and fails to take advantage of the decline in the popularity of the UF it can confidently look forward to a victory in November. Mr Nijalingappa's conclusion, on the basis of the Rajasthan by-election three weeks ago, that a pro-Congress swing had already taken place in the country may have been somewhat premature. After Haryana and Krishnagar it is no longer so. It is, of course, a different question how far all this can be attributed to last year's good monsoon. Indian elections, like the Indian budget, are perhaps largely a gamble in rains.

Patriot says that the lesson of the Krishnagar by-election is that the UF has not yet developed the capacity for a positive appeal to the mass mind. This incapacity stems chiefly from the superstition that non-Congressism is regarded by the people as a virtue that compensates all other weaknesses. As long as this invalid belief haunts any section of the left, collectively it will not be able to produce any worthwhile impact on public opinion. Secondly, the indifference to the idea of a United Left Front on a national scale makes for weakness in all United Fronts. To imagine that Mr Mahamaya Prasad Sinha's attack on Mr Ajoy Mukherjee and the bitter quarrel that has developed between Mr A. K. Gopalan and Mr T. V. Thomas in Kerala will have no bearing on an election in West Bengal or any other State where a United Left Front wants to win a victory over the Congress is futile. The Indian voter, however isolated or however amenable to persuasion through money, is politically conscious enough to demand that he be shown the

size and shape of the alternative that will replace the Congress if the latter is pushed out. The constituents of the United Fronts have had no time since the general election to sit down and calmly and realistically examine the people's attitude to them or their own organisational strength and weakness. If this continues not only the approaching general election in West Bengal but eventual contests in most other non-Congress States will be as disappointing for the parties and coalitions of the left as Krishnagar, if not more.

Good Fairy Julie

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

MAGIC becomes the keynote of the Disney's film *Mary Poppins* from the very beginning when a queue of nasty, haggard-looking nannies in front of the Cherry Tree Lane house of George Banks, is swept off the street and out of the clouds materialises Mary Poppins, a perfect answer to the Bank's kids' specification for a kind and rosy-cheeked nanny. The children are won over and order descends on the chaotic household of the Banks. Mary Poppins is all charm and her genial frivolity is almost contagious. The film relies mainly on the antics of Mary Poppins and her friend Bert (superbly played with a genuine cockney flavour by Dick Van Dyke) and the junior Banks share their excursions as they walk into a picture of the countryside painted on the pavement. Here indeed the special effects run riot and through an ingenious juxtaposition of live-action sequences, painted backdrops and animated figures, fantasy and reality intermingle and as a torrential rain washes away the painting and the characters are thrown back into a real and solid Edwardian London. The imagination, resources and labours of Disney Studio have been able to make the screen bubble with feeling, retaining all the warmth of P. L. Travers' tricky fantasy. There is gentle and clean fun in the episode

of the Uncle Albert who floats laughing round the ceiling, and the subtle symbolism such as the fits of laughter making Albert soar up and the sad thoughts thrusting him down, is really remarkable. One would not also fail to notice the surrealist poetry of the brilliantly choreographed rooftop dance of the chimney sweeps. The atmosphere of an old-world London peopled with crazy admirals, typical city-gents, stiff upper-lipped bankers and the neurotic suffragettes is wonderfully evoked and the performers put up a fine show. Dominating everything and making the screen aglow with passion is Julie Andrews as the good fairy Mary Poppins. This young soprano flits through the scenes with exuberance, elegance and a permissible measure of zaniness. She is extremely conscious of the effects her appearance can make but she never shows off. Negating all our conventional ideas about an English nanny, she slowly begins to unfold the subterranean coyish charm beneath her rigid exterior. She has the peculiar magical ingredients which the stars are made of. May she sing through a thousand films.

Verma's Show

BY AN ART CRITIC

About a year ago we first saw the paintings of Raj Verma, who was then having his first solo exhibition in Calcutta. Last week, he was again on view at the Academy of Fine Arts, Cathedral Road.

Mr Verma's attitude has undergone considerable change, and a change for the better. He has become more thoughtful, more perceptive, more expressive. However, this is true only about some of his exhibits. There is, unfortunately, no consistency about his work, and, while a number of his exhibits show him to have delved deep into his innermost self, there are a few that barely scratch the surface. Some of his pictures possess a definite character, some others are pale and innocuous.

There is an awe-inspiring Kali, with

a tongue of fire (not in the apostolic sense) and electric eyes, which confronts one immediately on entrance. "Three Faces", a semi-abstract piece in pastel, has interesting forms. "Ostracized" is structurally sound. "Pain", a line drawing aided by the dry brush, shows a command over the human form, albeit simplified. "A Moment" is a feeling and responsive canvas.

Letters

West Wind ?

I fully endorse the views in your editorial "West Wind"? (May 18). Some Marxian economists have welcomed recent economic reforms in the USSR and other East European Peoples' Democracies. Non-Marxian economists in general and anti-Marxian economists in particular are welcoming these reforms and propagating the futility of Marxian economy.

Socialism does not entirely rule out the use of the market to measure peoples' consumer goods preferences, provided market demands are well within the folds of overall planning, and socialist political and cultural education ensures that there is no revival of capitalist processes to create demands to satisfy producers' desire for high profits.

Moreover the use of profitability accounting as a criterion of the efficiency of production units is unobjectionable as an economic method even under socialism. But to consider profit as the basis of material incentives is altogether a different issue. This must introduce the concept of competition between enterprises engaged in the same field of production and would surely endanger the co-operative sharing of new techniques which might result in increase in productivity.

Russian leadership has confused Lenin's emphasis on learning from U.S. production methods. The Leninist style in work has two specific features: (1) Russian revolutionary

set-up and (2) American efficiency. The first is "the life-giving force which stimulates thought, impels things forward, breaks with the past and opens up perspectives." But it has every chance of degenerating in practice unless it is combined with American efficiency in work. The latter is "the indomitable force which neither knows nor recognizes obstacles; which with its businesslike perseverance brushes aside all obstacles." It has also every chance of degenerating into narrow practicalism unless it is combined with revolutionary sweep. The combination of the two alone produces the best type of Leninist worker, the style of Leninism in work. A misinterpretation of all these has led the present revisionist leadership to woo the dying old coquette—U.S. imperialism.

Jyotirbikas Kundu
Nabadwip.

Genocide

In his article 'Genocide' (May 18) Sartre comments: "Since the U.S. Government does not carry on this war for direct economic reasons it has no objection to the ending of this war by an extreme strategy, that is by genocide". Sartre seems to have formulated a new theory of bourgeois wars. Eisenhower once said that they must not lose the tin and tungsten resources of Indo-China and the *New York Times* made a similar comment. Jean-Paul Sartre still thinks that the war is not for economic reasons and that genocide is required only to save U.S. prestige.

Economic gain does not mean that companies will directly invest money in the Vietnamese market. They will reap profit through war industries and accessories. In the present capitalist world all countries are having war economy. Why? Because in the moribund state of world capitalism the purchasing power of the people has decreased so much that the Government itself has become the principal purchaser through the defence industries. This is for giving an 'artificial stimulation' to the economy. Capital cannot stay idle, be-

cause then there will be inflation and production cuts, which will result in retrenchment and lock-outs and the people will revolt.

From the Vietnam war, Japan makes an annual profit of \$1,000 million. When Japan is only a satellite of the USA, the lion's share of the big boss can be imagined. Our Indian masters are also not deprived of this treasure. Current Indian economy is also war economy. The Gadgil Commission confirms it—"The defence budget benefits private enterprises." That is why disputes with China and Pakistan are not settled, a constant war atmosphere is kept alive. The USA has no other way but to wage reasonless wars one after another, only to stave off economic collapse. These are not mere wars, but 'war business'.

MOMINUL HAIDAR
Calcutta.

A Teacher's Tale

Mr Gyan Kapur's Calcutta Diary (Frontier, May 18) contains a dig at the Gazetted Officers. But there is another side of the picture. Government college teachers and some of the Government school teachers are gazetted officers too. The way some of them are treated at Writers Building is shocking. I have been a Government college teacher since February, 1961. On November, 1966, I was transferred to Taki. I was about to leave for the USA at that time because I had been enrolled as a P. G. student of the University of Pennsylvania. Somehow or other, I could not go to the USA and had to go to Taki instead. I had to cover a distance of 140 miles every day because my wife is epileptic, my children read in a Calcutta school and my aged mother is ailing. In course of the last one year and a half I have written four letters to the DPI, West Bengal, sent medical certificates, prescriptions and letters from the Indian Medical Association, Calcutta branch, for his kind consideration. Copies of two of the representations were handed over to two UF Ministers, Prof. Jyoti Bhattacharya and Mr Somnath Lahiri.

In my last representation I demanded a thorough medical check-up of my mother, wife and myself by doctors nominated by the Government, at my expense, if necessary. All that I wanted was a transfer to Calcutta. Not one of my letters was answered. In the meantime, because I had written a letter to the Editor of *The Statesman* condemning bureaucracy in Writers' Building my yearly increment has been stopped and some of my arrears still remain unpaid.

I am ill with bronchitis. I cannot afford to buy my medicine, nor can I hope for speedy recovery. In the meantime, Writers' Building has seen the most successful strike of the year. Clerks in the Education Department are at present so busy with their co-ordination committees and the bejmani of Dharam Vira that they do not find any time to show the letters of gazetted officers to their bosses.

Rathindranath Chattopadhyay,
Lecturer, Taki Government College.

Exams

I do agree with Mr Rajib Roy (May 18) when he emphasises the hardship of students having to take examinations with their syllabus unfinished. Every step should be taken, without delay, to end such a state of affairs. But where Mr Ray fails to convince me is his plea for postponement of examinations. Syllabus left unfinished is more a time-honoured convention with most of West Bengal colleges than a unique feature of recent years. Secondly, we have seen how popular student leaders with extra-academic objectives make the whole student community plunge into the political whirlpool. And this leads, as chain reaction, to numerous student strikes with total disruption of studies. Thirdly, to defer examinations because of such routine affairs as political movements and strikes would be as absurd as to postpone examinations because of nor'wester or drought. I hope 'the struggling students' of West Bengal with their remarkably developed political consciousness would cherish goals more meaningful than the deferment of examinations.

And finally, unlike Mr Roy, I would like to congratulate our new Vice-Chancellor on his firm dealing with the political trouble-makers.

S. GANGULY
Berhampore.

"Aging" Leadership

I was delighted to read the letter of Mr Prakash Sinha (May 25) highlighting how a pincer attack has been mounted on the CPI(M) leadership.

The way it is being criticised by certain interested people and journals reminds me of the Aesopean fable of the man who set out along with his little son on a journey to sell his mule in the market. If one fine morning we find that the Marxist party leadership has decided to map out a course of action chiming in with the views expressed against it by these critics, they will perhaps say, "Well, you have carried perfection to excess. Hence we can't help pulling a face at you unless you hark back to what you had been doing in order that we may continue to criticise you to our heart's content!"

ANINDITA SARKAR
Cossipore, Calcutta.

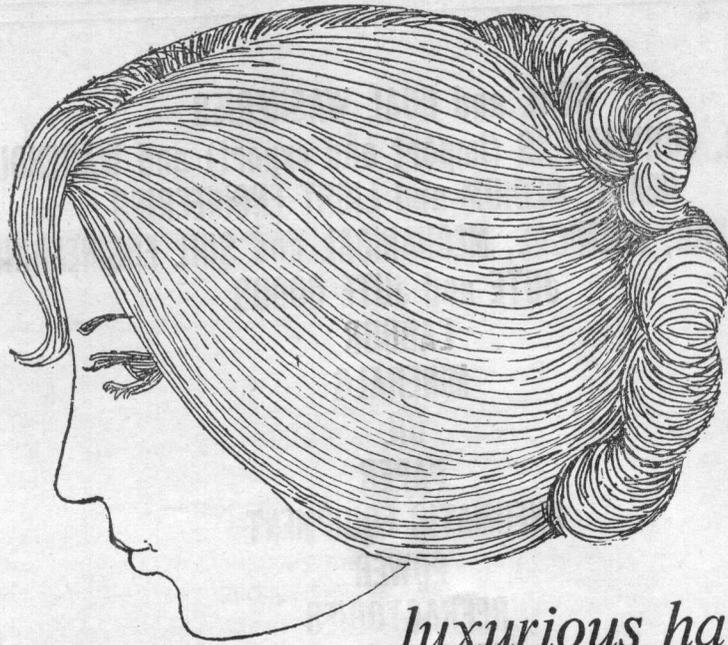
Cinema Strike

It is weeks since the cinema workers went on strike. The sight of striking workers selling potato-chips and vegetable chops in front of some of the show houses shows their sacrifice and determination. Some fraternal organisations and well-wishers of consequence have made known their sympathy for the workers. And the West Bengal Government, instead of grasping the nettle, has so far been busy twisting the tails of the tycoons of the film industry by periodically threatening to take this action and that against them.

But why are progressive artistes silent over the struggle waged by their comrades and found wanting even in formal expression of sympathy and moral support for them?

R. N. DEB BARMA
Roynagore, 24-Parganas.

JUNE 1, 1968



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The hospital crisis, like the food crisis, is there for good, it seems. When the big row was made about squatters in Government hospitals and the tetanus cases, I had hinted in these columns that the causes had to be found in a different corner. Now this has been borne out by no less a person than the President of the Indian Medical Association.

Dr M. Mukherji made it plain at a Press conference that tetanus infections during operations instead of decreasing are going to increase. Going through the reasons listed by the President of the IMA, it is obviously a failure of management which is responsible. It is no use blaming workers or even resident surgeons if those who manage hospitals do not provide necessary sterilization equipment, set up operation theatres in such a way that risks of infection are minimised and in other ways prescribe safety rules. But then this is the fate of the people in a system where bureaucrats control everything. Big buildings may be all right to impress foreign visitors. In spite of the IMA's long standing demand it seems no steps have been taken for fixing certain standards for hospitals. Apparently, the bureaucrats and politicians who rule us feel that what they are giving the common people is good enough for them and are surprised if anyone demands a better deal. After all, anyone who is anybody anywhere goes for treatment not to a hospital but to a nursing home.

The housing shortage is another of the problems which are destined to be permanently with us. The limited number of Government flats, therefore, attract a large number of applications which are kept pending for years.

A friend who applied for a flat was quite surprised to receive a letter of allotment within only 3 months. His pleasure, however, was short-lived. The flat which had been offered to him was at a monthly rental of Rs. 255 which came to about half his monthly net income. In the inscrutable ways of officialdom, all applicants are required to attach pay certificates

along with their applications. Otherwise these are not considered at all. But when the flat was allotted, no one seems to have bothered as to how a man could pay half his monthly income as rent.

Or is it that it is taken for granted by the officials who decide these things that everyone has income which cannot be declared?

Governments are notoriously loath to pay out when necessary but always eager to collect money. When finances are low, as with the West Bengal Government, it may be supposed that efforts might be made at least to encash cheques paid to the Government. However, the unseemly tug-of-war started by the Governor, Mr Dharma Vira, with the employees is rapidly bringing the Government machinery to a pass where even ordinary chores get stuck.

Called upon to pay the Government a cheque for a small plot which I had been fortunate to get in Kalyani, I deposited it with the Department. Imagine my surprise, therefore, when after 4 weeks I found that the cheque had not even been sent for collection. And yet this Government talks of shortage of funds.

Prices continue to soar or at best remain pegged at their old levels in Calcutta and West Bengal, while in the neighbouring States they are coming down. Even ordinary rice sells around Rs 3 a kg. in the modified rationing areas around Calcutta while American experts are talking of India being able to export rice. The only eatable which shows a downfall in price compared to previous years is the mango. The market is glutted with all varieties of the fruit which is a highly perishable commodity and as such does not lend itself to hoarding, even in cold storages.

At the same time the price of potatoes remains where it was and Mr Dharma Vira's threat to seize stocks from the railway is but a memory.

Forgotten is the threat of the United Front to launch an agitation (I forget the phase number) to make the Governor 'Go back'.

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