

# frontier

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## On Other Pages

|   |    |
|---|----|
| COMMENTS  | 2  |
| BANKING ON WHAT?<br>MONITOR   | 5  |
| <i>View From Delhi</i><br>WAITING FOR AUGUST 16<br>FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT | 6  |
| <i>Kerala</i><br>CONGRESS: ENEMY WITHIN<br>RAMJI                                  | 8  |
| CALCUTTA DIARY<br>GYAN KAPUR  | 9  |
| ON TRANSITION BETWEEN<br>CAPITALISM AND SOCIALISM<br>CHARLES BETTELHEIM           | 11 |
| <i>The Press</i><br>THE ORDINANCE<br>READER                                       | 14 |
| WHAT ABOUT LIBRARIES?<br>ARUN RAY   | 16 |
| A SPACE ODYSSEY<br>PRABODH KUMAR MAITRA   | 17 |
| LETTERS   | 17 |

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## THE AMERICAN PRESENCE

MR Richard Nixon has promised the world some pieces of rock that two of his countrymen picked up on the moon. Obliging Governments will probably treasure and exhibit them as symbols of the supreme American contribution to human civilization. But human affairs continue to be messy, as the U.S. President must have noted when some naughty communists in Manila threatened his life. And he could not have forgotten the American troops who had somehow failed to kill all the communists in Vietnam and were getting desperate to return home. What happens when they do return? Mr Nixon has been trying to find out from some of his Asian estate managers. Will they be orphaned when Washington discontinues its paternalistic role, as he said it would? But there is really no such danger. Mr Nixon has made it quite clear that the USA may give a new look to its presence in Asia, but its intentions will not change. Whatever changes may occur will be in tactics, not in strategy. Peace in Asia, he has told his Asian hosts, will not come from the USA, but must be ensured by the Asians themselves. Of course, with American help.

So Asians must fight Asians. This has been the American policy for a long time. The only tactical change now is to encourage it further and to reduce the American responsibility for direct involvement in the fighting. Vietnam has shown that direct participation can be unbearably costly in terms of precious American lives. As far as possible, the Americans hereafter would prefer to be on the sidelines, but making sure that Asians go on killing Asians with increasing frenzy. The fighting will not only be instigated but also aided with the necessary lethal supplies. If, of course, there is any danger of the game coming to a stop or of the wrong side winning it, the Americans will have to step in. But this time they would prefer not to risk their own lives. Mr Nixon has given a plain enough warning of nuclear intervention.

Mr Brezhnev has no reason to be unhappy at the new American initiative. Its outcome cannot be different from the consequences that would flow from his own formula. But the Russians have to pretend otherwise. So, on the eve of the Nixon tour, *Izvestia* published an article making a great show of indignation over a suspected American plan to create a new military grouping to replace SEATO. The idea, it was noted with some-

what overdone concern, was to rope in even the nominally non-aligned countries in the name of protecting them from the Chinese variety of communism. Since China provided an excuse for American intervention, "here is another proof of how Maoist policy is advantageous to the imperialists". The Russians offer no such advantage; their policy causes no American anxiety and hence do not make the Americans meddle in other people's affairs. Nor does American policy ruffle the Russians, who are now unperturbed even by the U.S. President's visit to Rumania.

Meanwhile, we shall wait and see how the Indian people—not the government—react to Mr Nixon when he sets foot in India.

## The Millers' Story

The IJMA, it appears, is a charitable institution and not just a jute millers' association. In the press advertisement released on Monday, it has made several statements which could flatter Oxfam or Mother Teresa. For example, it appears from the ad that the association has been paying to the jute growers more than the support price fixed by the Central Government so that the jute growers can live honourably. It is full of love for the jute mill workers and would pay them more if only it was not so overwhelmed by the irrational taxes levied by the Government. It is striving hard to earn foreign exchange for the benefit of the dear country, sacrificing its own share of hard-earned profit. It is losing on the world market because of Pakistan and synthetics and therefore it should not be laboured with further commitments; on the other hand it should be given a free hand so that it can hold its ground on the international market, just for the benefit of the workers.

The release of the ad has been timed well. The call for the indefinite strike to start on August 4 is on. The West Bengal Government has turned down the Centre's request not

to appoint a State Commission to probe the jute millers' infamous trade practices. The jute workers have turned down Mr Hathi's proposal to hold bipartite talks on their wage structure.

The IJMA may ask itself a few questions before it ventures further ads. How is it that the export figures given by the association and by the Government do not tally? Why does the association speak more about the loss of markets in hessian and sacking and less about carpet-backing, which constitutes fifty per cent of the export?

According to the IJMA, the duties imposed on jute goods are penal, because they have been crippling the industry. How does it explain then the phenomenal increase in jute millers' profits—an increase of thirty crores—in the last twenty years? If Pakistan and synthetics have been posing so grave a problem for the last ten years, how did the exports rise to Rs 242 crores from 40 crores in 1950-51?

The IJMA has agreed on principle that the workers' wages should be increased. What prevented it from implementing the joint agreements reached in 1967 under the auspices of the Union Labour Ministry? It was agreed at that time that dearness allowance was to be readjusted to the cost of living index every three months, Rs 24 paid as ad hoc compensatory allowance, extra wages paid to night shift workers and a committee was to be formed to fix wages, gratuity and permanence of *badli* workers. The committee was to submit its findings within six months. Nothing happened.

It seems that the IJMA is seeking an ally in the West Bengal Government in its mock battle against the Centre. The Central Government has done all it can to help its protegee, the jute millers. It has fixed support prices at an abysmal low, exempted them from taxes, offered subsidies, allowed the millers to deposit their profits in foreign banks and overlooked under and over invoicing. The commission contemplated by the West Bengal

Government should never be given up in favour of the Tariff Commission, which accepts the millers' accounts at their face value without seeking to expose their hidden practices. Neither should the Bibhuti Misra Committee, as announced lately by the Centre, should cause the UF any hesitation—the announcement has come too late. The proposed strike, the second one in the jute industry in thirty-two years, cannot but bring the millers and their patrons to their senses. It has already caused a minor surprise—the INTUC is supporting the strike call even though it has the blessing of the UF Government!

## Credit Allocations

*A correspondent writes:*

Some second thoughts on bank nationalisation are in order. The Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Bill does not quite explain how the fourteen nationalised banks are to receive the guidelines of policy from above. Nor is there as yet much indication, apart from newspaper gossip, of the nature of the working relationship to be struck between the Reserve Bank of India and the acquired banks. Perhaps the Prime Minister will speak her mind as the debate on the Bill proceeds; perhaps she is still trying to decide on the appropriate blend between discretion and monetary daring. But unless she cares to dissipate the goodwill she has created for herself round the country she must guard herself against some particular entrapments. The farm lobby has turned out to be one of the most enthusiastic groups supporting the fait accompli of bank nationalisation. The gleam in the eye of each kulak is easy to understand. Bank nationalisation, according to the aspiration of the gentlemen-farmers, is excellent, since they expect to receive a major chunk of the credit bonanza which is now supposed to flow towards the direction of agriculture, and small industry. To rob Paul to pay an equally obnoxious Peter could hardly

be a sound rationale for the bank take-over. Mrs Gandhi herself would comprehend the absurdity of allowing the resources of the nationalised banks to shore up the exploiting rich farmers if she would remember the rest of the programme enunciated in her Bangalore statement, where much is made of the need to protect the small farmers against the aggressive designs of the kulaks. The latter must therefore be warned, truly and well, before certain types of expectations get built up.

Bank nationalisation offers the Government the opportunity for the first time, since independence, to put into shape a coherent scheme for allocation of credit among the different sections and parts of the community. It is not even enough to work out a rough allocation of aggregate credit over the different sectors; about equally important is the need to evolve a socially appropriate rate structure. The principle which the private commercial banks in the country have followed till now, namely, the lusher you are, the larger the advance you will obtain from the banks, and at the lowest possible cost, has to be reversed all the way. There can be no question of depriving major industries of necessary credit; but they must be made to pay the requisite price for it; the phenomenon of tycoons obtaining credit from compliant banks at 6 per cent and making a return of 26 per cent on the basis of that credit has to end once and for all. The price of credit must be jacked up in such instances in conformity with the parallel principle of what the market would be able to bear. A rich kulak, if in need of funds, should similarly be made to pay a rate of interest commensurate with the fabulous returns he is currently reaping from agricultural pursuits. At the other end, it should be among the discretionary powers of the banks under the reorganised set-up to offer credit to a small industrial organiser or farmer, if he so deserves, at a rate which is below cost. In the overall, such types of transactions could still provide an ample surplus from the banking sector for being

channelled towards socially desirable directions in case the rich borrowers are soaked as much as is feasible.

A discriminatory rate structure should thus be the pivot of the operational principles to be enunciated for the nationalised banks. This is however an instrument which can cut both ways. If the right men are in charge, such a policy could bring about a large measure of egalitarianism in the distribution of credit; but if what takes place is a mere shuffling of the old bunch of civil servants having strong links with the established business houses, the apparatus could be twisted, and twisted to serve altogether perverse ends. This is also the lesson which emerges from the Report of the Industrial Licensing Policy Enquiry Committee. The Committee has covered several old grounds as well as a number of new ones; its suggestion to bring back under industrial licensing items "liberalised" during the laissez faire years of 1964-68 is in pleasing contrast to the pusillanimity displayed by the so-called Planning Commission. But what stands out is the Committee's implicit observation that it is not so much codes and procedures, as the men who are assigned the responsibility for enforcing them, who determine the actual economic process in a country. As the Committee points out, despite the clear directives of State policy, financial institutions in the public sector itself—for example, the Industrial Financial Corporation of India—have followed a systematic policy of discriminating in favour of the leading industrial houses.

It is men who matter, men who are to be entrusted with the job of turning the tide of socio-economic policy away from the Swatantra high waters of recent years. Such men have to be chosen with care. Mrs Gandhi, at this late stage, cannot possibly choose individuals who will support her with their acumen as the rope supports a person who is going to be hanged. This theme needs to be repeated over and over again. Gimmickry or not, she is now launched on a course of economic policy which is not easily reversible.

A failure of this policy will be, more than anybody else's, her funeral. She must choose well the individuals who are to translate her policy into economic reality. In this task, the conventional group of pragmatists will scarcely do; she is in need of men who have the right ideological convictions. It will be a great pity if she misses the point.

## What A President !

With Presidents—elected, self-appointed, vice and acting—resigning all over it is heartening to find at least one digging himself in. South Korean 'President' Chung Hee Park's concern for the well-being of the country does not allow him to step down at the end of the second term of presidency in 1971—as required by the 'constitution'. His Democratic Republican Party would rather suitably change the 'constitution'. But immediately after the news got wind 40,000 university students came out on the streets of Seoul to stage demonstrations. In weeklong clashes with the police hundreds of them were injured and arrested. To establish 'order' South Korean universities and colleges have been closed down.

In demanding 'constitutional' conduct from 'President' Park the students showed themselves to be more royalist than the king! After all the present 'constitution' was a gift from General-President Park after he seized power by the military coup of 1961. And obviously he does not regard 'constitution' to be a sacred cow. He rigged in a cavalier fashion the elections (June, 1967) held under his constitution. In the following month he smuggled out of the country troops to be hired by the Americans for service in Vietnam—that too in violation of his constitution. With such a record of independence, 'President' Park can only have a hearty laugh at the efforts of the opposition parties to form a national struggle committee to fight against constitutional amendments. In their manifesto adopted late last month the

committee said that the proposed amendment to give the 'President' a third term would lead to 'perpetual dictatorship'.

Irrelevant questions of constitutional propriety apart 'President' Park has an impressive record to his credit—enough to earn him a couple of Presidential terms. Although after the coup of 1961 he removed his uniform to become a 'civilian' President, he did not ditch the army which, now 620,000 strong, is the fourth largest in the world. Apart from annual budgetary increases in the Army's share, 'President' Park has secured for it American aid of \$150 million per annum. Close bonds with that great power across the Pacific have not only provided South Korea with affluent customers in the shape of 50,000 American troops stationed in her territory but also secured for Korean products a fabulous market in South Vietnam.

Thanks to the 'Presidents' business acumen, he has turned the Army into a good commercial proposition. Fifty thousand Korean troops now serving in Vietnam are Seoul's best foreign-exchange earners. As one Korean paper bluntly stated, "we can earn foreign exchange through the export of idle manpower". Thus by a single stroke the 'President' could end unemployment, boost the 'national' economy and supply cannon-fodder in the war, in the words of President Park, "to implant freedom and peace on a foreign land".

The U.S. Secretary of State William Rogers visiting Seoul this week would certainly discuss about the next con-

tract with the South Korean army. To soften the Americans Seoul has already offered Cheju island, 50 miles off the south-western coast, as a nuclear base after U.S. withdrawal from Okinawa. There is no reason however to think that their talks would be confined to problems of military collaboration. Chung Hee Park's 'presidential inauguration' in July 1967 was blessed by the presence of American Vice-President Hubert Humphrey. During his coming visit to Washington this month 'President' Park can reasonably hope to get some necessary tips about how to bulldoze the amendment through Parliament.

## Class Full

Time was when nothing delighted Nehru more than dubbing Britain or France a second or third rate Power. It did not then occur to most of us that this circumstantial demotion broke few hearts in France or England where the Empire had already become something of a stage joke. There is a certain poetic justice, and perhaps dramatic irony, in Sir Val Duncan's recent report to the Foreign Office that most of the British missions abroad are useless; and those in the so-called Commonwealth countries are quite unnecessarily expensive. India is thus, for the British Foreign Office, a member of what Sir Val calls the "outer area". In spite, or because, of India's growing irrelevance in international affairs, London has now the pleasure of telling New Delhi that, diplomatically, India is no longer a Brahmin. A *vaisya* status, with a few commercial delegations visiting now and again, will do. The enormous High Commission in New Delhi will have fewer Rolls-Royce cars and be a little less high.

This again is the British habit of understatement all over the place; and around it can be seen the old and incorrigible Hindu habit of swallowing a whole cow and then being choked by the tail. It never oc-

curred to New Delhi, newly independent, that an altered caste system was being devised for the world after World War II. In those confused days, rendered more confusing by the Cold War, Nehru, if not all New Delhi, got a wholly exaggerated notion of India's rôle in world affairs. Illusion persists, as can be seen from the frequent foreign trips made by Mrs Indira Gandhi, Mr Dinesh Singh and some not made at all, after all, by Mr T. N. Kaul. It does not do New Delhi much credit that it had to wait to be told by the British where it got off, somewhere far and far away from Heathrow.

Commensurate rethinking around Palam or Dum Dum is indicated because some of India's permanent friendships have proved rather transient; equally unhappily, some of her transient animosities are proving rather obsessive. Perhaps the original sin of Indian diplomacy was that it started with that misbegotten child of the British Empire, the Indian Civil Service, with its political wing, and grew with the Indian Foreign Service, which is more caste-conscious than the most orthodox Hindus could ever think of. It was Beecham who first told the British railways how to get out of the red; Duncan is apparently doing something very similar for the Foreign Office, which already has a handful from the merged Commonwealth Relations Office. It is amazing how none of these things ever happen to South Block which is plainly modelled on the British pattern—of perhaps a hundred years ago. Nehru was sometimes fond of saying that India's foreign policy grew out of India's traditions and history; that the policy and the service would so soon acquire some of the worst indigenous qualities was perhaps unknown to him.

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# Banking On What ?

MONITOR

THE bank nationalisation measure has once again shown the ideological bankruptcy of the Left Establishment. The basic question that it has not tried to face in any serious, scientific way is the following : what are the *class* forces working behind this measure, and, in the interest of which *class* has the measure been undertaken ?

It should, in the first place, be clear that bank nationalisation will strengthen the state capitalist sector of the economy, exactly in the same way as the nationalisation of the Imperial Bank and life insurance had done. It should also be clear to people having an elementary sense of objectivity that state capitalism has, in the main, served the property owners rather well during the last two decades. Before showering fulsome praise on the "progressiveness" of the particular act in question the neo-Social Democrats should have done at least two things—look back on the evolution of modern capitalism and return to some of the well-known classical texts of Marxism-Leninism. Then they would have seen that at a certain stage of the development of capitalism the contradiction between the social character of production and the capitalist character of appropriation creates a situation where the productive forces themselves press forward to put an end to the contradiction, "to the actual recognition of their character as social productive forces"—in the classic phrase of Engels—and it is this pressure that leads, ultimately, to the direct ownership and control of the means of production by the State, as the official representative of the capitalist society. Marx had such a development in mind when he spoke of "the abolition of capital as private property within the limits of the capitalist mode of production itself".

Apart from the *general* factors that have pushed contemporary capitalism

to bestow upon the State—its official representative—an increasingly larger share in the national economy there have been *specific* factors in India contributing towards the same end. There are reasons to believe that the Indian bourgeoisie who, in the main, had led the national movement against imperialism, wanted to develop India along an independent capitalist path. This most mature bourgeoisie in Asia outside Japan was very much conscious of the economic difficulties faced by an underdeveloped country like India and it was specially aware that private enterprise alone, given the meagre financial and technical resources at its disposal, could not deliver the goods. Hence it *consciously* opted for an active and increasing intervention by the State in the Indian economy. There was also a second reason—to limit the excessive concentration and monopoly of economic power—that too in the interests of the capitalist class as a whole. (Juridical anti-monopoly measures are quite common in contemporary capitalism). The big bourgeoisie, by itself very weak in such a backward country, could not afford to alienate itself from the middle and the small bourgeoisie as far as possible. Thus state capitalism was instituted and strengthened in order to serve the interests of the capitalist class as a *whole* even though it might go against the interests of *particular* capitalists.

## Revealing Broadcast

It is in this background that we should examine this particular measure of nationalisation. We must say that in this respect Mrs Gandhi's short broadcast on the theme is infinitely more revealing than all the pompous and high-sounding declarations on it indulged in by the neo-Social Democrats. She stressed that what the government was doing was nothing new. On the one hand bank nationalisation had been undertaken

also by "non-socialist" (read "capitalist") countries and, on the other hand, the present act was "a continuation of the process which has long been under way". In the context of the increasing difficulties of resource mobilisation (within the confines of the existing property relations) it seems quite normal for the Prime Minister to declare, in the second place, that it was a step to "mobilise adequate resources for development" (read "capitalist development"). Thirdly, this measure was aimed at providing better credit facilities to agriculture, export and small-scale production. This, again, shows that the act is an attempt to widen the basis of capitalism in order to strengthen the position of the capitalist class as a whole. All this is done without in any way affecting the existing relations of production and without touching the foreign monopoly capital which plays a vital role in our economy.

The *political* context of the measure in question is also important. It is the context of the increasing radicalisation of the Indian people and the utter discredit in which the Congress has fallen beginning with the 1967 elections. As this proves, it is no longer possible for the ruling party, representing the exploiting classes, to behave in the old way and some new illusion of "progressiveness" must have to be created on its behalf. This necessity is perhaps not yet fully understood by everybody in the ruling party and as a result the differences in the ruling party manifest themselves through different stands taken on the one hand by Morarji Desai and his faction representing the so-called "conservative" elements and Indira Gandhi and her faction, on the other, representing the so-called "progressive" elements.

We must also note among the big bourgeoisie the absence of any significant sign of being unduly upset by this act, though there might have been some initial reservation about it on the part of individual representatives of the class. That there is already a change even in this reservation is

seen from a report on commodity dealers in Bombay appearing in the *Economic Times* of July 23. It says that "a cautious attitude is being adopted by most commodity dealers but the general working of the markets does not appear to have been affected much as a sequel to the week-end ordinance. . . . The trade received considerable comfort from the fact that the banks had been working as usual. The later belief that the nationalisation of banks would hit the smuggling activities hard was virtually discarded today".

It is significant that the measure was unanimously accepted by the Central Cabinet and men like Chavan, S. K. Patil and Atulya Ghosh, hitherto dubbed "reactionary" by the Left Establishment, went out of their way to congratulate Mrs Gandhi on her taking this "bold step". Did not Morarji Desai himself point out that it was he who had moved the relevant economic resolution at the Bangalore AICC "without any reservation"?

It is also not surprising that the most vocal political opponents of the measure are Jana Sangh and Swatantra leaders, connected, on the whole, with the most backward segments of the economy like the semi-feudal elements in the countryside and small capitalist elements engaged in trade and commerce in towns.

Of course there is no negative without the positive. In a historically objective sense measures of nationalization, including the present one, are progressive inasmuch as they create the material conditions for consolidating the power of the proletariat once it has seized political power. But this is independently of the will of the bourgeoisie resorting to nationalisation and such acts do not in any way make it progressive, far less revolutionary. The workers remain wage-earners, proletarians, after nationalisation as they were before. Even then the working class can, in a semi-feudal, semi-colonial economy like ours, forge a provisional united front with the bourgeoisie resorting to nationalisation provided this latter class wages struggle against semi-

feudal elements at home and imperialism abroad. Needless to say, this condition is no longer present in India today. Hence it is incumbent upon the working class and its allies in India not to relent in their struggle

### *View from Delhi*

## Waiting For August 16

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

**I**T was time someone knocked the Stray Thoughts of Mrs Indira Gandhi into a handy volume for our edification. One stray thought led to the nationalisation of banks. Another, to go by the political grapevine, will affect foreign trade. But nationalisation of foreign trade is a proposition her communist friends and even *Pravda* would find hard to swallow because that would close the only channel through which proceeds of the rupee trade could be pumped into the Indian political system to hasten the progress to socialism without tears.

The conflict between Mrs Gandhi and the Syndicate is not over issues, despite Mr S. K. Patil's ranting at the Rotary Club luncheon, and the hardened cynic should be pardoned if he sees something sinister in the surreptitious campaign of certain busybodies to conjure up visions of a conspiracy against India that is Bharat that is the Prime Minister. There was very little conviction behind the bank nationalisation decision, if one has any knowledge of the circumstances in which the snap decision was taken. The name of a certain official of the Prime Minister's Secretariat is linked with the politicking that attended the decision. And now you will hear in New Delhi talk of Mrs Gandhi announcing many dramatic decisions—not out of a passion for socialism or any conviction but to checkmate the Syndicate. The announcements, we are told, would be timed to counter the moves of the

against the Indian bourgeoisie and its allies (or masters) for a single moment, under any pretext whatsoever, till they have built their own state power after smashing the existing state machinery.

party bosses out to ruin the nation.

On the surface it is a lull and will be so until after the Presidential poll on August 16, after which Mrs Gandhi is expected to undertake a crash-campaign tour of the country to refurbish her image and put the Syndicate in its place. The hypocritical crowd which was promoting the Syndicate against Mrs Gandhi is the one now on the Prime Minister's bandwagon trying to tell everybody that the Syndicate is finished. But in a war of attrition of this kind no side is going to be finished so easily.

Part of the war of attrition was the story inspired in a daily about a move to reorganise the Home Ministry, stripping it of political intelligence and Centre-State relations. It was certainly aimed at embarrassing Mr Chavan. If anyone lost in the whole drama, it was poor Mr Chavan whose chances of becoming the Prime Minister some day are receding fast. He backed the Syndicate over Mr Sanjiva Reddy but when it came to forcing a "resignation crisis" in the Cabinet, he backed out quietly. Mr Kamaraj's bluff is also called.

Between now and August 16, neither the Syndicate nor the Prime Minister is likely to attempt any adventure. Both the sides are content to lie low because Mr Sanjiva Reddy's election involves big stakes. There are wild rumours afloat about imminent and massive defections from the Congress side in favour of Mr V. V. Giri. The two communist parties look absolutely convinced about this

and seem to base their calculations on the Prime Minister's readiness to engineer a sabotage of Mr Sanjiva Reddy's election. If Mrs Gandhi were to attempt such sabotage (there is evidence of some of the junior members of the Kitchen Cabinet engaging in such sabotage using the communist Press) it would be a desperate gamble. For in spite of all this, Mr Sanjiva Reddy might win and the Syndicate would get even with her sooner than she expects.

Short of a miracle, Mr Sanjiva Reddy should win hands down. To defeat him, as of now, the Prime Minister would have to organise the defection of about 30 per cent of the Congress value vote, which she cannot. There is little doubt that there would be large-scale cross-voting in the contest and defections are not a Congress monopoly. In the last minute, the rightist parties, if they find Mr Giri is getting support from Congress sections, would quietly jettison Dr Deshmukh and vote for Mr Sanjiva Reddy.

Arithmetically, Mr Sanjiva Reddy should have no difficulty in winning: the Congress has 52.5 per cent of the value vote in the electoral college. Mr Giri's hard core support will not exceed 25 per cent and Dr Deshmukh's, 18 per cent. The rest is floating vote and even if there is substantial cross-voting from the Congress side in favour of Mr Giri, the second preference vote of the rightist parties will go to Mr Sanjiva Reddy. It is certain that Dr Deshmukh will be eliminated in the first count if Mr Sanjiva Reddy does not win outright. In the second count, the second preference of Dr Deshmukh's voters would be distributed between Mr Sanjiva Reddy and Mr Giri. The Congress whip requires its voters to exercise only the first preference vote and most of them will not exercise their second preference. The same will be the case with the leftist parties because none of them would favour giving the second preference vote to Mr Sanjiva Reddy or an opponent of bank nationalisation like Dr Deshmukh. The second preference votes

would be from the rightist parties and none of them are for Mr Giri. The bulk of these votes therefore would go to Mr Sanjiva Reddy and are as good as first preference votes for him.

The Syndicate seems to be playing it cool, leaving Mr Sanjiva Reddy's campaign in the initial stages to Mrs Gandhi's charge, to add to her embarrassment. The bosses will step in in the later stages to shepherd the votes at the Pradesh level.

#### Durgapur Union

It was an uncomfortable week for the Marxists in Parliament. The interrogation of the Government on the recognition of the union in Durgapur revealed that it was a matter for the State Government, which means the extremist strength in the union is one of the reasons holding up the recognition and if anyone is responsible for the non-recognition it is the CPI (M) and its Ministers.

The greater embarrassment was over the "wreck-the-Constitution speech". In the first skirmish, in the Rajya Sabha, the Marxist argument was that the statement in question had been distorted by the Press. When Mr Bhupesh Gupta tried to defend the CPI (M), Mr V. C. Shukla silenced him by gently reminding him that after all the two CPI ministers in Kerala were the first to take exception to Mr Ranadive's speech in London. The Namboodiripad-Gopalan statement had been issued in defence of Mr Ranadive's speech.

The next day in the Lok Sabha, the party seemed to be on a slightly stronger ground. Mr Gopalan was a member of the House and his case cannot go by default. Mr P. Ramamurti's contention was that the newspaper reports of the statement were garbled versions of the Malayalam original and the authentic text should be taken into account. But it transpired that the published versions were not substantially different from the text made available by Mr Gopalan. At this stage, Mr Ramamurti demanded a full debate on the issue. What one failed to understand was why his party should object to a cal-

ling attention motion when it was ready for a full debate.

The statement perhaps was issued to impress the restive following of the leadership's revolutionary bona fides and needless to say Mr Namboodiripad will offer an elaborate, philosophical explanation to the Home Minister. In the first place, there is nothing objectionable in the statement and the party would do well to limit itself to saying that it stood by it. Mr Gopalan is taking this stand while Mr Namboodiripad's reaction to the Home Minister's summons for talks is not too commendable.

One recalls a similar controversy some ten years ago, when in a particular context, Mr Namboodiripad as Chief Minister of the CPI-led Ministry said if the Congress and other forces in the State continued to do what they were doing, it would lead to a civil war situation. Mr Nehru wrote to Mr Namboodiripad at length and the Chief Minister replied at greater length and no one remembers how the controversy ended.

July 27, 1969

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## Congress : Enemy Within

RAMJI

THE Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee Executive on July 18 discovered a bigger and more insidious enemy than the Marxists, and that is Mr Panampilli Govinda Menon, the Union Law Minister. Mr Menon, in a speech, on July 2, at a meeting convened by the Youth Congress and Kerala Students Union elements, near Trichur, compared the KPCC to an aged prostitute who is now forced to make a living by renting out her daughter for the oldest profession on earth. He compared the KPCC to the broken bow of Kamadeva. He charged it with lack of imagination and inability to organise any sort of effective political work or agitation and stated that the leadership was now obliged to rely mainly on the younger elements of the Youth Congress and the Kerala Students Union. He cited examples of popular issues and welfare programmes which, though fully financed by the Centre, had been systematically neglected by the State Administrations. The KPCC had not taken up any popular cause for agitation. They had not even convened a meeting during the last two years in which he could have had a chance to meet and address the Congress workers.

These remarks, heartily endorsed by the rank and file of the Congress and by the general public, touched the KPCC leadership to the quick. They sent petitions to the Congress President and the Prime Minister, stating that Panampilli was helping to damage the image of the Congress. Receiving no response, they represented the matter again, personally, to the leaders at the AICC Bangalore meet. This also did not produce any result. But it provoked a justified remark from the Union Law Minister, who compared the Pradesh Congress leaders to a pack of spoilt children who made it an inveterate procedure to pester the Centre with their tearful

appeals at the slightest provocation. He called upon them to function like dignified, responsible men.

The KPCC President stated publicly that the party was gravely considering the Law Minister's remarks and that action would be taken on these at the next KPCC meeting. After this the Law Minister, in an effort to mollify them, issued invitations to the leaders to a dinner meet at his house. No KPCC leader accepted the overture. On the other hand they tried to mount a case against the Union Minister. They asked the Students Union President to give a written report of the speech at the meeting where he had presided. The Union President went back on his usually obedient role and refused to do so, obviously feeling that, as between the two, Panampilli was the stronger.

At the KPCC Executive meeting it was decided to call for an explanation from the Union Law Minister. This is likely to turn into a double-edged sword. Panampilli, or for that matter, any honest Congressman could trot out any number of points to substantiate the allegation. It is a fact that even those who dislike the Union Minister (and this section is considerably big inside the Congress), have welcomed his speech which was only plain, unvarnished truth.

The Pradesh Congress leadership has all along been blind to popular issues and their efforts have always been directed at retaining a stranglehold on the organisation by fair means or foul.

The fate of the KPCC leadership, in getting more and more alienated from the rank and file of the Congress, seems to have overtaken the Youth Congress leadership also, since they have elected to play it safe by allowing themselves to be stooges of the KPCC leaders. Over the issue of the suspension of Mr M. A. John, a KPCC member, for voicing radical views, the Youth Congress has been split into two camps. The top leadership sided with the old guard of the KPCC while a big section has gone against them and have been acknowledging Mr John as a leader even

though they have been strictly warned not to give him any platform and not to have any truck with him. A campaign for suspending such disobedient cadres and local Youth Congress leaders is in full swing in several districts, particularly in Trichur District, at the time of writing.

The Kerala Students Union, the students' wing of the Congress, is also split over the issue of Mr John. While the leadership has bowed down to the dictates of the KPCC and issued strictures against him, a big section of the rank and file have revolted against this. This development is likely to affect the forthcoming college union elections.

### Anti-Malappuram Move

In spite of the fact that the Jana Sangh imported big guns from outside, like a retired Brigadier, and a sizable number of volunteers too for their campaign against Malappuram District which had also the benefit of support by the Sarvodayite, Mr Kelappan, the agitation fizzled out most ridiculously with a demonstration in Trivandrum, during the third week of July. All along, at all centres, the agitation was the object of public ridicule and though the papers blazoned forth impressive reports, the demonstrations were at best a perfunctory formality. And the biggest laugh was raised at the final demonstration in Trivandrum led by a retired Brigadier and the final episode of the farce came with a high sounding statement by the Secretary of the Jana Sangh that the agitation had achieved its objective and that it had been a success. However comforting these assumptions might be, the agitation did not achieve its main, covert, objective, which was to embarrass the Government by provoking Hindu-Muslim riots. It is a tribute to the restrained and liberal outlook of both these communities in the State that, in spite of the insensate communal propaganda whipped up by the agitation, they refused to oblige the Hindu communalist movement headed by a so-called true-blue Gandhian Sarvodayite.

As indicated already, the CPI has

## Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

decided to give up its heroic, holier-than-thou stance and eat the humble pie. They now state that they did not issue any ultimatum and that they had only the interests of the United Front and the Administration at heart. The Marxists, in an unrelenting mood, were insisting on a categorical assurance of better behaviour in future before it could agree to convene the Co-ordination Committee which the CPI demanded. The Marxists alleged that this was a suspicious move by the CPI, intended to rope in some parties of the UF to gang up against the Marxists. An assurance to the contrary was being demanded by the Marxists as precondition to any Co-ordination Committee meeting. The CPI meeting with all the national big guns headed by Mr Dange, at Trivandrum, did not cause even a tiny ripple in this State and the end result happened to be abject surrender. This mood is not likely to last long. During the next Assembly session, commencing in August the local CPI leadership is likely to resort to Marxist-baiting.

The Marxists scored a big victory over the CPI over the issue of the transfer of the Managing Director of the Travancore Cochin Chemicals, the premier State undertaking. But this victory has been at the expense of the interests of the State. For, under this Managing Director, the moribund unit had developed vigorous signs of life and development. Unfortunately, he became a bone of contention between the Marxists and the CPI and with the Marxists' victory, he has been ditched and along with him, the unit too.

This illustrates the price the State has had to pay for the interminable political dogfights between the partners of the United Front. Development and welfare programmes of the State are all in cold storage; the positive, people-oriented aspects of the Administration have become atrophied and massive funds allotted by the Centre for vital needs like roads and bridges etc. are allowed to lapse time and again.

MILITARY commanders are always supposed to be men of direct action and simplicity. In spite of all the tall talk of democracy there is an undercurrent of feeling among the votaries of democracy in this country that since it is not working, the alternative is the Pakistan way, and they make no bones about it that they consider it a good thing too. The latest pronouncement of the Pakistan President, General Yahya Khan, can therefore be commended to these votaries of military dictatorship. The General in his wisdom has commended that all those students who appear at examinations thrice but still fail to pass can be straightaway given their diplomas. This is the General's solution to the problems of student unrest in his kingdom.

Of course even in the gagged Press of Pakistan protests have been voiced by those who think they know better than the General. But the students themselves may welcome it, though their reactions are yet to be known. In time unfortunately two classes would surely come up. There will be those who passed and got their diplomas or degrees or whatever it may be called and those who got them by a system of 'fail-pass' which of course has nothing to do with the 'fail-pass' of the Strategic Air Command of the US, the dear friends of the General and his ilk.

Whatever the final outcome of the issue in Pakistan, it is sure to have sympathetic vibrations in our country. Here at least is one issue on which large bodies of people, even if students only, can agree wholeheartedly. In any case it is nowadays nobody's guess when most examinations are going to be held. Nor can one be too sure that the results when announced will have any real relation to the answer papers handed in by the candidates. Once the system of fail-pass is introduced, most points of

friction between the examinees and the examiners will be removed. Only one point will remain: it may be asked why in a democracy three failures should be necessary for a pass? It may be all right in a country ruled by a military dictator, whatever he may chose to call himself. We should certainly do things a little better. Why not pass them after a second failure? It may even be asked, why not after the first failure?

Nineteen eighty-four is still a decade and a half away. But Orwell's strange phrases, it seems, have started appearing much ahead of time. Thanks to Big Brother Yahya Khan from now on it can be said with truth: Fail is pass.

All this has interesting possibilities which democrats can work out in detail. Ticketless travellers caught a number of times can be given free season tickets. Smugglers, after being hauled up twice or thrice, can be handed out permits. Doctors who bungle and kill patients can be awarded MDs. Food and medicine adulterators can be given licences.

And to be fair to the poor deprived politicians, would-be ministers who cannot get into the legislatures or Parliament after a certain number of tries should be given the membership.

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Truly the power of the Press is great. Specially when it has the mighty dollar behind it. Otherwise how come that even those who swear by Marxism and anti-American-imperialism have gone wild in lauding the landing of the American astronauts on the moon? It is no doubt a great victory of science and technology but, to slightly misquote Mrs Gandhi, for what purpose? The idea of science for its own sake has finally, it seems, been sold to the world, Marxists et al. Practically no one of any consequence has questioned what it means or why billions of dollars should be spent on this race to the moon when the USA even now has a large percentage, not blacks alone but whites even, of

those who have to get free rations from the Government just to eat. Prof. Satyen Basu was an exception in his reaction, but his is a lone voice.

Public memory of course is proverbially short. But at least Marxists should study American imperialism a little more closely and not cast the problems of yesteryear to the dustbin of history. The race for space mastery was never started in the interest of pure science. In any case whatever others might think, science for the sake of science is not much in vogue in the USA. Each and every programme has a definite end. The space race had definite military ends. The USA has made no secret of its belief that whoever wins the race to the moon is going to dictate his terms to the world. The landing of the astronauts on the moon marks the victory of the USA's programme for world domination. In

the light of this achievement no one should laugh at the idea of a nuclear base on the moon, may be manned, may be unmanned. This will ensure that in the unlikely event of the entire U.S. nuclear armoury on this earth being destroyed by another power, the USA can still hit back and destroy the enemy whoever he may be. That is what we are all celebrating.

Much has been made recently by the *Ananda Bazar* group of papers about the different versions given out by CPI(M) leaders and organs of the incident involving the paper and which led to a big furore in the name of freedom of the Press. It was implied that this group was always factual and gave the only true version. Without going into the details of this controversy, it is instructive to see how the speech of the Deputy Chief Minister at the Press Club function has been reported and commented upon by the English paper of the group, the *Hindusthan Standard*.

Not being present at the function, I was completely puzzled by the following comments attributed to Mr Basu by the paper: "We're well aware that mostly we'll be criticised and indeed, it will mean we've gone wrong in our policies somewhere. If this does not happen, however, we can't insist that all people will think as we do."

I was extremely puzzled to read this. It was an incredible statement to come from Mr Basu. On the face of it he was admitting in the first sentence that all criticism from whatever source it might come would show that the United Front had gone wrong in its policies. The next sentence was completely confusing. If it meant anything at all, it showed a touching Gandhian preference on the part of Mr Basu for criticism and regret if it did not come.

I was completely mystified, refusing to believe all this was what Mr Basu had actually said. Going through *The Statesman* was not of much help either. No such state-

ment by the Deputy Chief Minister was at all reported. The mystery was cleared up only on Sunday night when I heard the actual words of the Deputy Chief Minister when the radio reported the event.

Mr Basu's comments should have read as follows: "We're well aware that mostly we'll be criticised and indeed, it'll mean we've gone wrong in our policies somewhere if this does not happen. However, we can't insist that all people will think as we do." A mere matter of punctuation no doubt. But it made a world of difference to the meaning. The paper cannot plead the excuse of the much-maligned printer's devil for such lapses.

The editorial of the *Hindusthan Standard* of Monday is also based on a statement which the Deputy Chief Minister never made. To quote the relevant portion: "If newspapers operate without outside interference and editorial comments are taken in the spirit they are made that will only help the Government—it will come to know where it has gone wrong."

Mr Basu in fact should not and indeed, has no such touching faith in the *Hindusthan Standard* or any such newspaper's editorial comments in guiding the United Front Government. He in fact assigned a purely negative role to the editorial comments of such newspapers. If they do not criticise, it would show the Government was going somewhere wrong in its policies. Perhaps it is too much to expect that these newspapers would accept such a role. So they have chosen to ignore or slur over the whole issue.

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# On Transition Between Capitalism And Socialism

CHARLES BETTELHEIM

(In our issues of February 15 and 22 we reproduced an article by Paul M. Sweezy on Czechoslovakia from the *Monthly Review*. The following is the text of a letter addressed to him by Charles Bettelheim and published in the March issue of MR. Mr Bettelheim is the Director of the Centre d'Etudes de Planification Socialiste at the Sorbonne in Paris.)

Mr Sweezy's reply will be reproduced next week.)

I READ with great interest your article on "Czechoslovakia, Capitalism, and Socialism" in MR. It contains many important and accurate statements—especially those in which you say that the Czech reforms were strengthening the existing system, and stress the fact that what was involved was a new step along the road of capitalism (you say "in the direction of capitalism"). Your denunciation of the confusion of "juridical categories" with "real relations of production" is similarly an indispensable correction. This applies equally to the remark that capitalist ownership is not necessarily "private" ownership (personally, I think that it may be more appropriate in this context to speak of "individual" ownership, since capitalist ownership as a social relationship is always "private" ownership—that of a class—even if it assumes a "social" juridical form; I think that when Marx speaks of "the abolition of capital as private property, within the boundaries of capitalist production itself," his target is precisely "private" ownership in the juridical sense). Some of your conclusions also strike me as very correct, particularly your statement that "in the final analysis... the invasion of Czechoslovakia was a sign of weakness in the face of a growing crisis in the bloc as a whole."

Your article, however, also contains elaborations which strike me as

erroneous, and which I would like to discuss. I shall limit myself to two basic problems: (1) the problem of the nature of socialism, and (2) the problem of the roots of the trends toward the restoration of capitalism (hence, of the origin of this restoration where it has already clearly taken place, as in Yugoslavia).

I begin with the second point.

Your thesis seems essentially the following: the trend toward the restoration of capitalism has its "origin" in the role attributed to the *market*, in the reliance on *material incentives*, and in *organizational forms* (what you, on p. 6 of your article, call control of the enterprises "in the enterprises themselves").

I think, however, that this list only designates "secondary facts"—*indices or results*, and not the *decisive factor*.

In my opinion, the *decisive factor*—i.e., the *dominant factor* is not *economic* but *political*.

This decisive political factor (the importance of which you unfortunately appear to deny in the last pages of your article) results from the fact that the proletariat (Soviet or Czech) *has lost its power to a new bourgeoisie*, with the result that the revisionist leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is today the instrument of this new bourgeoisie.

It is impossible to *explain* the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the international political line of the USSR (the character of its relations with the United States and with China), or the "reforms" and the results toward which they tend (the full development of the "market," and the economic, political, and ideological domination over the masses made possible by market forms), unless it is recognized that the proletariat is no longer in power.

## Market Relations

To list as the primary factor—as you do—not class relations (the existence of a bourgeoisie which "collectively" owns the means of production) but *market* relations is due, it seems to me, to an error in principle, and leads to a number of other errors.

The error in principle is the very one you denounce at the end of the note on p. 7 of your article; there you say that in order to understand the nature of a mode of production (or of a social formation), "one must dig deep below the surface to uncover underlying relationships and processes." But to put emphasis on the existence of a "market" (and therefore also on the existence of money and prices) in defining the nature of a social formation, means precisely to put emphasis on the *surface*, on what is immediately "apparent"—it is consequently a failure to come to grips with underlying relationships. These exist at the level of production i.e., at the level of basic social relationships. It is the system of these relationships that produces determined *effects* (economic, political, ideological) on the agents of production. One of these essential effects may be to *divide* the agents into social classes and place these classes in *determined objective relationships* (of domination, exploitation, etc.).

The practice (economic, political, ideological) of the *agents* and particularly of the political leaders can be understood only in terms of the place they occupy within the system of social relationships.

The error in principle—putting emphasis on surface phenomena,\* on the

\*I think that in the analysis of a social formation two kinds of "errors" (i.e., of ideological approaches) are readily made. One is to "limit" the "analysis" to *juridical forms* (this is the error you denounce); the other is to "limit" the "analysis" to *economic forms* (this is the error which you make, and which is also present in any discourse on political economy concerned only with *forms*: exchange, money, prices, market, etc.). *In both cases no true analysis takes place, since the emphasis is pre-*

existence of a market, money, and prices (which existed also before the Twentieth Congress and which exist in all the socialist countries), and on the practice of the leadership with respect to the "market" (a practice which precisely should be explained)—leads inevitably to other errors.

You very correctly condemn the use of the term "market socialism", chiefly because this term places a one-sided emphasis on the existence of market forms in socialist society. It is here that this term reveals its ideological character; it indicates an ideology which favors a considerable development of market relationships, when in fact such a development (which is possible only under the domination of a bourgeoisie) leads to the full restoration of capitalism.

But your criticisms are of a different nature.

On the one hand, you denounce not the *development*, beyond a certain point, of market relationships, but the very *existence* of market relationships; moreover, you *isolate* this existence and therefore disregard the social and *political conditions* which make the full development of market relationships possible. You thereby grant a "privileged" status to these *forms*, which are posed without reference to the conditions without which it is impossible to give a "description" of their significance. In doing this—and here I repeat the statement I have made earlier—you grant a privileged status to a secondary fact, a surface fact, and obscure what is essential and primary: the basic social relationships, the class relationships.

On the other hand—and this follows from the preceding point—your argument, in my opinion, rests on an important confusion. You say that the term "market socialism" is "contradictory." Formally this is obviously not an argument, since all reality is contradictory. The only problem then is to know whether the

*cisely on forms*, i.e., on what is "manifest," whereas analysis must reach the "underlying" elements which the manifest content dissimulates (while at the same time "revealing" them).

verbal expression of a reality and of the contradictions which characterize it, is *adequate or not*—i.e., whether these contradictions are *analyzed* in scientific terms or only *shown* in ideological terms.

#### Plan and Market

With respect to the contradiction which forms the subject of this discussion and which you designate as one which assumes the form of a contradiction between "plan" and "market", the very fact that this is a contradiction in practice indicates that it is neither a "verbal" contradiction nor an "ideological contradiction" (in the sense of a contradiction inherent in a certain ideological "conception" of socialism), but that it *expresses*, in terms that are still ideological, a real and effective contradiction.

Moreover—and I believe that here lies the root of our disagreement—the contradiction "plan"—"market" designates an essential contradiction in socialism viewed as a *transitional* or passing form; this contradiction is the *surface effect* caused by a deeper contradiction, by the basic contradiction in the transitional form which is obviously situated at the level of the production relationships and productive forces. In certain cases this surface contradiction becomes the principal contradiction, but it can never be correctly dealt with if it is not viewed in relation to the structure of the production relationships and the productive forces.

The preceding means that the contradiction between "market" and "plan" will continue throughout the transition from capitalism to communism.

What characterizes socialism as opposed to capitalism is not as your article suggests) the existence of market relationships, money, and prices, but the existence of the domination of the proletariat, of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is through the exercise of this dictatorship in all areas—economic, political, ideological—that market relations can be progressively eliminated by means of *concrete* measures adapted to *concrete situations and conjunctures*. This elimination

cannot be "decreed" or "proclaimed". It requires political *strategy* and political *tactics*. When these are lacking, the finest proclamations may lead to the opposite of one's stated (and hoped for) goal.

The notion of a "direct" and immediate" abolition of market relations is as utopian and dangerous as the notion of the "immediate abolition" of the state, and is *similar in nature*: it disregards the specific characteristics (i.e., the *specific contradictions*) of the period of transition which constitutes the period of the building of socialism.

The *trend* of the evolution at the level of *forms* (the development or retreat of market forms) is an index of the evolution of social relationships, but it is no more than an *index*. To "limit" oneself to this index—without elucidating the movement of the contradictions that determine this evolution—may therefore be completely misleading. In certain circumstances the proletariat which has assumed power may also be forced into strategic or tactical retreats on the economic front.

It goes without saying that in order for these *retreats* not to be transformed into defeats the first condition is that they be clearly understood as such and not understood (and "presented") as "victories," for the ultimate aim is the complete elimination of market relationships; there can be no doubt that this is possible only with the disappearance of the state, and this can be achieved only through the establishment of communism on a world scale.

If in the Soviet Union the restoration of bourgeois domination is accompanied by an *extension* of the role of the market, this is evidently because this domination cannot be complete ("accomplished") except through the full restoration of market relationships; this is, moreover, the reason why this restoration can be understood only as an effect, as a secondary phenomenon, and not as a primary phenomenon.

#### Impelling Force

Another error (and it is a "trans-

formation" of the preceding one), it seems to me is the assertion that the existence of the "market|plan contradiction" is an impelling force leading towards the restoration of capitalism (this is stated in your note cited above).

In reality, at the level of forms this contradiction is not an impelling force leading toward anything. *Everything depends on the manner in which it is dealt with*, and this manner depends itself on class relations, including those existing at the ideological level.

I wish to add that I consider it useful to present these criticisms because the formulations you advance—and which you are not alone in advancing (they are found especially in the speeches of Fidel and the writings of Che)—result objectively in producing *effects of ideological obscurantism*.

These formulations in effect mask the essential problem of socialism, that of power, the defence of which under certain conditions may even require, as I have recalled earlier, retreats on the economic front (e.g., the NEP). If your formulations were taken literally, Lenin, in favoring the NEP—i.e., in "strengthening the market"—supposedly "promoted capitalism".

The effect of ideological obscurantism stemming from the formulation I am criticizing manifests itself particularly in your analysis of the "economic reforms." Reading this analysis, one has the impression that at the time they decided on these reforms, the Soviet leaders supposedly could have made a "choice" between two "techniques":—"One would have been a cultural revolution in the specific sense that the Chinese have given to that term. . . . The other response was to rely increasingly on the discipline of the market and the incentive of profit."

But what is involved here is not a "choice" between two techniques that would enable the economy to "progress," but a *line of demarcation* between two political courses, between two classes.

To be sure, the problem that remains to be solved *on the historical level* is that of the concrete process which made possible the reconstitution

in the Soviet Union of a powerful bourgeois class and its accession to political power. The Twentieth Congress as a matter of fact could not have had its particular content or effects if there had not *already* existed social relationships unfavourable to the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is also a good indication of the fact that the development of these social relationships was not "determined" by the development of the market, but on the contrary was *anterior* to it.

On the theoretical level on the other hand (and here too I find myself in disagreement with your article), the declarations of the Communist Party of China concerning the Cultural Revolution, its objectives and methods, clearly elucidate the *ideological and political* conditions that must be realized before the threat of a bourgeois restoration can be successfully opposed. These declarations, to be sure, are not only theoretical; they contain also numerous *concrete* discussions of concrete conditions in China. These declarations therefore cannot be "applied" mechanically, but their theoretical core has universal value.

I will add that in given historical circumstances the effect of ideological obscurantism mentioned earlier is increased through an effect of displacement. This occurs when the ideological positions which provoke this effect of obscurantism "feed" a political practice. Such, I think, is the case of the political practice of the Cuban leadership (which I consider it necessary to discuss briefly at this point).

If this leadership attaches so much "importance" to problems of market relationships—to the point of making them the "center" of its ideological conception and political practice—this cannot be the result only of a subjective "error." In my opinion, this is the effect of an ideology and a political line which concentrate all power in the hands of a ruling group, which therefore do not create the necessary conditions—ideological, organizational, and political—for the democratic exercise of proletarian power.

#### Class Significance

On the one hand, this political prac-

tice has a class significance which cannot be analyzed here; I shall say only that it is related to political domination by a "radicalized" section of the petty bourgeoisie. On the other hands, it produces *necessary consequences*—i.e., consequences that force themselves of necessity on a government that "appeals" to socialism.

One of these consequences is precisely an *ideological displacement*: the *identification* of socialism *not with the dictatorship of the proletariat* (consequently with the power of the laboring masses, with the domination of the Marxist-Leninist ideology, with the practice by the revolutionary leadership of a mass line, etc.) but with the "disappearance" of market relationships.

This "disappearance" is evidently purely *mythical*, for it cannot take place under the given concrete conditions which include of necessity the existence of money and prices, so that the fact of "denying" this existence leads to the opposite of the desired aim—notably to the development of a black market. In spite of speeches and repression, the effects of real relationships always end by imposing themselves.

The *substitution* of the myth of the "disappearance" if the market, money, etc., for the necessary dictatorship of the proletariat obviously involves a *political line*—a line corresponding to precise social forces and a precise ideology.

The speeches of the Cuban leadership,\* especially Fidel's speech of

\* Political *analysis*, of course, must never interpret ideological speeches literally. Here, too, *analysis* takes place only when one goes beyond the surface of the speech, consequently beyond its *manifest* "meaning," in order to uncover its *latent* meaning, the meaning which the terms of the speech at one and the same time dissimulate and reveal. Such an elucidation must first of all locate those passages of the speech in which "masking" occurs; such passages constitute "critical points." These are naturally of various kinds, depending on the ideologies involved; but they present themselves frequently in the form of "myths," which are signs of the *unthought*, of obsessive and

August 23, 1968, confirm this: what Cuban leaders "criticize" in the developments which took place in the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries is not the restoration of a bourgeois dictatorship, or even the absence of proletarian democracy and a mass line, but only certain effects of a class domination which, precisely, remain unmentioned.

These effects are not mentioned because the Cuban leaders themselves do not see them. They do not see them because their ideology makes it impossible for *this crucial problem* even "to present itself" to them. In their eyes, the "dictatorship of the proletariat" is "assured" by the existence of certain "forms" (a certain juridical form of ownership, a certain organizational form of the Party, a certain form of expression, etc.) and not by concrete social and political relationships.

passionate themes that must be analyzed, so that a meaning may be uncovered other than the apparent one—a meaning which is no more "present" in the consciousness of the author of the speech than in the consciousness of the listener or the reader who naively responds to the literal meaning.

In the speeches of the Cuban leadership, especially since 1964, these obsessive and mythical themes are constituted by the "market," "money," "prices," the "calculations" of economists, etc. On analysis, these themes appear to be the "signifieds" by means of which very different "signifieds" are "repressed" (and "represented"); whatever "threatens" a highly concentrated political power which has raised itself above the masses. These "threats" (thought of as "threats against socialism") present themselves in the manifest form of the "market," "money," etc.; but beyond this form they "represent" the masses, their labour (which must be properly accounted for, if this labour is not to be arbitrarily wasted), their aspirations, their always possible spontaneous movements (the speech of August 23, 1968, which denounces precisely the "spontaneity" of market relationships is quite "significant").

It is the presence or absence of these unthought "signifieds" which fuels the vehemence of the speeches against money and market relationships.

If I have insisted on emphasizing the ideological effects of the central role which you attribute to the "market/plan" contradiction, this is because the fact of granting such a role to this contradiction (which is no more than a contradiction at the level of forms) makes it possible, in ideological representation, for this contradiction to occupy the place occupied, in Marxist analysis, by the fundamental bourgeoisie-proletariat contradiction.

Under given political conditions, this displacement also makes it possible to mask the real problems of the transition from capitalism to socialism, since these problems involve above all the development of the proletariat-bourgeoisie contradiction. This "displacement" consequently produces at one and the same time ideological effects and political effects.

In real political practice it is clearly possible to distinguish between a proletarian practice and a non-proletarian practice.

The former is constantly preoccupied with "financial strictness," stable and declining prices, with raising the standard of living of the masses by lowering the prices of widely used consumer goods. This was one of the concerns of Soviet policy until the Twentieth Congress. This is the constant concern of Chinese policy. Such a concern is not "fetishism"; it stems from respect for the labour furnished by the masses, and for their rights.

The second practice is indifferent to inflation or shortages, and conceals this indifference by speaking contemptuously of "economic, monetary, and financial" problems. This contempt, however, is in actual fact contempt for the labour of the masses and their rights. It has therefore the same character as contempt for proletarian democracy, for the free expression of opinions by the masses. If this second kind of contempt cannot be expressed but must be repressed, the first kind, however, may assume an ideological form enabling it to affirm itself openly. This form thus reflects a double signified—one "thought" in ideological terms (i.e., in reality not thought), the other strictly "unthought."

The Press

## The Ordinance

READER

THE Prime Minister struck again on July 19 when she introduced the bank nationalisation issue at the Union Cabinet meeting and had it promulgated as an Ordinance. Those who had thought that the economic policy resolution adopted at Bangalore would be just another exercise in words (as had happened earlier with the pious Bhubaneswar resolutions) were mistaken. No little dismay was caused at the realisation that Mrs. Gandhi was prepared to play the game to the end irrespective of the consequences.

For the game will have its consequences. The Prime Minister is already two up against the Syndicate and it is extremely unlikely that the club of five big organizational heads (Messrs Nijalingappa, Kamaraj, Patil, Morarji and Chavan) will take it lying down. If they are quiet at the moment, it is only because of the impending Presidential election where the Syndicate-sponsored Sanjiva Reddy is opposed by Mr Giri who, though an independent, enjoys the support of Mrs Gandhi and quite a few others—it has been heard both in Calcutta and New Delhi that the Prime Minister has issued instructions to some Congressmen on how they should vote. What happens on August 16 will determine the fate of the Congress party as the result either way would cause a breach. The Bangalore session made it clear that the Congress could no longer play a double game, that the time had come to choose between the right and the left. It now remains to be seen who goes where.

Thus the Congress Party is doomed. Strangely enough some people think, so is the country. Particularly the big newspapers. Used to a system which grew and developed during 22 years of Congress rule, these people feel that the death of the party would also be the end of the country. What

AUGUST 2, 1969

else could have inspired at least four leading dailies to come out with editorials and articles last week announcing critical days ahead because of the imminent split in the Congress? And this at a time when five States do not have Congress governments. Maybe operating in the plush comforts of Delhi, these newsmen have, like their patrons, begun to consider the States as colonies. What matters is Delhi, the numerous advantages it offers to the chosen few of the news world. It's crisis indeed.

In Churchillian fashion, the *Hindustan Times* calls the recent developments in Delhi as the End of the Beginning. The power struggle going on within the Congress party since Mr. Nehru's death has intensified with Mrs Gandhi relieving Mr Desai of his portfolio. Since then there has also been a bid from her to give the Government a socialist orientation and there are chances of the party splitting ideologically. At the same time the paper talks of a chance that the party will not split, power being the strongest ideology in the Congress camp—it almost sounds like wishful thinking since for that very reason those out of power would be prepared to fight to the last. Perhaps the writer also realised that, for, in the very next paragraph he concludes that the process of change has only started and not ended. Confusion at a critical moment?

*The Hindu* has viewed the situation seriously. Mr G. K. Reddy writes from New Delhi that the country is heading for a period of political instability. It had a foretaste of inevitable catastrophe when the Prime Minister decided to nationalise banks. Mrs Gandhi has undoubtedly won the first round and the Syndicate is in disarray. It is a sad commentary that a simple and predictable manoeuvre could have caused such confusion in the ranks of stalwarts. Visibly disappointed with the Syndicate's performance, Mr Reddy reminds its members that they cannot think any more in terms of eating the cake and keeping it too. The Prime Minister is also reminded that while extremism can be a virtue for agitators it is a

positive disadvantage for practising politicians saddled with vast responsibilities. In the midst of all the sermonising, however, Mr Reddy apparently forgot to say how the country was heading for instability. He spoke of the party perhaps because the party and the country to him are synonymous.

The political commentary in *The Statesman* has been for some time now in the nature of a gossip column. One reads it to know many stories from the capital, who met whom and who said what, rather than to find any attempt at serious appreciation of events. It wasn't much different last week when the political correspondent informed us that Mr. Atulya Ghosh quoted Eliot at the Congress Working Committee meeting, that Mr Desai was hurt, Mr Chavan unhappy and Mr Kamaraj angry. Mr Nijalingappa, one further learnt, became unwell, so he had to go to a hill resort. Mrs Gandhi's followers, on the other hand, seemed to have been amusing themselves with counting heads at the CPP meeting.

After the grave discourses in other papers, one found *The Statesman* quite refreshing. The heading spoke of an encounter but on reading the commentary one felt the term was being used to mean social meets—more than half of it gave a detailed account of the members of the dramatis personae meeting one another. And at the most unexpected moment Mr Atulya Ghosh featured as somewhat of a Lord Shiva, now discoursing on the moon, now thinking of the Presidential election, remaining unruffled throughout—one can't help remembering that even a few years back this man's name was mud in *The Statesman* and he had never concealed his dislike for the paper. But that was in the past.

Indeed on reading the commentary, one could not help feeling that what had been written had been done on purpose. It was a strange departure from the earlier editorial where Mrs Gandhi had been denounced in real Swatantra manner, following the nationalisation of banks. This time it was almost impartial, certainly non-

committal. One wonders if a section of the Swatantra Party is having second thoughts after the support which the ordinance had even from Syndicate members like S. K. Patil. Perhaps like the Syndicate it has chosen the period from now till August 16 to lie low.

Politics is always in command in the newspapers; so far as *The Statesman* is concerned, the previous stance of an 'independent, impartial and non-party newspaper' has been given up and Swatantra politics is now most marked both in editorial policy and relations with the staff. A leaflet issued by its union employees says that they "cannot any more be silent spectators of the distorted presentation of struggles of workers and peasants in the columns of the newspaper, for producing which we have to toil day and night". The employees have their own grievances—non-payment of strike period money, overloads etc—which have forced them, so they say, to intensify their agitation. But they are seeking to raise it above the level of mere economism.

It seems that the Parsis, though fit to run furnaces and towers of silence, do not know how to manage newspapers which are a sort of tower of babel, and fall back upon a kind of McCarthyism. The sixties have struck heavy blows indeed at the myth of editorial independence. To do away with the pretence altogether, the proprietor should always be the editor; if there is more than one proprietor, they should be editor by rotation. How nice it would be to have a newspaper whose editor, by turn, is J.R.D. Tata, A. Mafatlal or Sir Biren Mookherjee! It would do away with the costly business of appointing an insurance expert as managing director whose presence is always felt like that of Tagore's King of the Dark Chamber.

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# What About Libraries ?

ARUN RAY

THE West Bengal Government has announced its decision to implement certain urgent primary tasks of education reforms neglected by the 20-year-old Congress regime, thanks to whose indifference West Bengal has gone from the 3rd to the 6th place in literacy, while some backward States have made much headway. But it is a pity that libraries have no place in the much-publicised education policy.

Let us take a glance at the prevailing conditions. Recently the Bengal Library Association conducted a sample survey on school libraries in the State. The data show a deplorable picture :

|                                     |                 |                        |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Library with full-time librarian    | 3.3%            |                        |
| Average student strength            | 637             |                        |
| Average number of books/journals    | 2,300           |                        |
| Average expenditure for a library   | Rs.380          | (per annum)            |
| Average issue of books to a student | 3               | (throughout the year)  |
| Average floorspace per library      | 22'-6" x 10'-6' | (including rack space) |
| Average expenditure per student     | Re. 0.60½       | paisa (per annum)      |

In colleges the conditions are not any better; there are trained librarians with inadequate space, poor budget, scant stationeries and insufficient staff with unsatisfactory salary and status. There is a peculiar system of having a professor-in-charge in a college library who, though he has no liability to incur or any responsibility to shoulder, draws his remuneration. For loss of books the librarian is often taken to task by the authorities, but not the professor in charge of the library. In many cases the librarian has to deposit security money, which is

contrary to the recommendations of the Library Advisory Committee of the Government of India (1959), while the professor in charge is exempted from it.

The libraries in the different polytechnics face the same difficulties as in college libraries. The students derive little benefit from these.

The university libraries are there for definite, specialized service to the readers. But library workers have little scope to acquire higher professional qualifications, such as M.Sc. in Library Science. Generally, university library buildings are constructed at a heavy cost, but the authorities do not think it necessary to consult the librarians about the construction of the library building. The result is reduced functionality of the building, and bad service, thanks to the 'unplanned planning' of the building.

There are more than 600 libraries under the sponsor system. These are also marked by lack of co-ordination, red-tapism and poor pay packets for the staff. Many of these do not get any grant for buying books. Besides, there are many libraries which receive grants (better call them 'doles') which are inadequate to cope with the rising price of books, binding cost and the demand for equipment.

There are some research-type libraries such as Asiatic Society, Bangiya Sahitya Parishad etc. which should be regarded as treasure houses but the authorities seem reluctant to take sufficient care of the valuable collections there. Soon many valuable documents which can never be replaced will be lost.

In all these libraries, the most important factor—'book selection'—is mainly based on whims, personal acquaintance with the author or on some other arbitrary thing. Librarians have little to do with book selection.

As education does not depend on class lectures alone but also on libraries, we would like to suggest some specific courses to the Government.

There should be a full-time trained librarian in every high and higher secondary school. The Secondary Education Commission, 1952-53,

known as the Mudaliar Commission, suggested this 15 years ago. At least 5% of the school budget and a minimum of 6.5% of the polytechnic, college and university budget (the Central Education Commission, 1964-66, suggested up to 10% in case of universities) should be spent for libraries.

A Masters' Degree course in Library Science should be opened so that librarians in different special and university libraries could serve in a more scientific manner.

Library legislation for the State of West Bengal should be enacted, as in four States—Madras, Mysore, Maharashtra and Andhra. In Kerala, such legislation is under way. For really useful co-ordinated library service, legislation is essential. There should be provision for a separate Library Directorate to be headed by the Director of Library Services who must be a professionally trained person. Under him there should be a hierarchical order of State, central, district, sub-divisional libraries and the like.

There should be a separate library structure for Calcutta. Under a central library there should be 100 ward libraries similar to the Delhi Public Library System. At least 2.5% of the education budget should be spent for public libraries.

Until and unless the public are made more and more library-minded any education policy, however progressive, is bound to flop. Without proper stress on libraries we shall be pouring water into a leaking barrel.

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# A Space Odyssey

PRABODH KUMAR MAITRA

BY a coincidence the week in which the astronauts descended on the moon for a brief spell, the very much earthbound Calcuttans were treated to a longish big-screen version of man's journey beyond the moon, the destination being Jupiter in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Stanley Kubrick took four years to complete this film of the Arthur Clarke book, only half the time NASA scientists needed to land their men on the moon. The scale here is fabulous and its execution leaves one a little awed. Clarke's account of the universe beyond cuts down man to a minisized maestro in the vast expanse of the universe. The first half of the film has a semblance of a narrative continuity though it encompasses the whole range of evolution to space age. The apes in the opening sequence give an essence of the distance mankind has travelled. Their disturbing presence gives one an uncomfortable feeling about the forbears. A rectangular slab appears and when it is flung in the air by one of the apes it becomes a spaceship in splendid slow motion. Perhaps it is intended to signify knowledge and its continuity.

The spaceship in its voyage now opens up a new vista inhabited by a few men and women. The range of gadgets, the details of the spacecraft, the way of living inside, take some time till the viewer gets acclimatised, as much as the men up there, to the ways of living in space. Kubrick's magnificent command is evident in effects produced in these sequences as if he operates the whole thing from remote control.

Not till the second half does one realise that what disturbs the author and the director is the fact that the machine created by man takes on the role of his master. A giant computer is in control of the spaceship in its voyage beyond. It is invested with human "feelings". It enjoys "working with people" and even has

"emotion". An agreement follows with the only surviving occupant who in desperation destroys its "faculties". The rest of the journey to the unknown in search of the likely source from where the slab comes, unfolds the state of time-space continuum. The pace is now breakneck, through an interminable array of riotous colour. Soon it pierces through a haze of glorious light till a stage is reached where the things resemble a not unfamiliar scene of a planet in gorgeous green. It seems that the lone voyager reached the dead end of his existence. He meets his own self—old, decrepit and dying—an indication of the tricks time plays on mortals who overreach themselves in the vain pursuit of the eternal which eludes and even defies man.

Much of the film, particularly the last sequences, remain an enigma. Only an inkling of a superman in the womb of time representing a higher stage of consciousness in the evolution which seems the ultimate saviour, is gathered from a view of this marvel of a space odyssey made by Kubrick.

## Letters

### Charges Withdrawn ?

Press and radio reports recently put out that the charges framed against the majority of the accused in the Tellicherry-Pulpalli Station raid cases are being withdrawn by the Namboodiripad Ministry. The Press release says in this context: "It is not the accredited policy of this Government to suppress the different political expressions of the people of this State". Since when did this become the 'accredited' policy of this government? Was this their policy during November-December 1968 and the months following? If so, why was it that they let loose terror in the countryside, why there was reckless manhunting and even jail repression? Why did they allocate such a fabulous sum in this

year's police budget, recruit police forces on such an unprecedented scale, give special powers to police officers and men of all grades and instal numerous sets of intricate wireless apparatus in police stations throughout the State? If all these are not meant for suppressing the legitimate political expression of the people, what else are they meant for?

The people of Kerala have chosen a new path to solve the innumerable problems that crush life out of them inch by inch. This is the path opened in 1967 by the revolutionary peasants of Naxalbari and the proletarian revolutionaries of Darjeeling district—the path of peasants' armed struggle.

To counter this totally unexpected development the reactionaries are entering the arena with many a 'new' tactic. With armed peasant struggles raging all the way from Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh to the length and breadth of the subcontinent, we see Indira Gandhi donning in haste the socialist grab with bank nationalisation, we see the diehards in the Congress and other extreme decadent parties, under the leadership of Patil and company of the 'Syndicate', waving the tattered flag of military dictatorship; we also see the leadership of the 'Marxist' party masking their reactionary revisionist features

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with 'revolutionary' slogans. It matters little to the Indian revolutionaries. The Indian peasants and the proletarian revolutionaries will march forward along the path opened by Naxalbari, the path of armed struggle.

K. Ajitha  
Calicut, Kerala

### Story Of A 'Closure'

The American Oil Company, Caltex (India) Limited, have reopened their office at 10, Camac St., though they announced a closure in newspaper advertisements on 8.11.68.

In their agreement with the workmen on this issue, the management said that the closure of their office at Chittaranjan Avenue was not a pretended closure but a real and bona fide one and that they had validly terminated the services of all clerical and labour employees located at this office and there was no scope for re-employment or reinstatement.

Now by reopening the office at new premises the company has proved that the closure was not genuine and that the termination of services was unfair, improper, illegal and mala fide.

The monthly payroll of the employees, before the closure was Rs. 60,000. But Caltex are doing the business to the extent of Rs. 50 lakhs per month in Calcutta city alone. The annual business done by this Company in West Bengal is to the extent of nearly Rs. 10 crores. During the last one year Caltex have considerably expanded their business; apart from the usual

products they are selling mineral turpentine and asphalt in considerable quantities; they have installed a grease plant at the Ramnagar Installation in Calcutta. The Company at present are selling 12,000 cylinders of cooking gas, making a net profit of Rs. 72,000 per month at the rate of Rs. 6 per cylinder—which is more than the total monthly payroll of the employees whose services have been terminated.

Caltex threw the employees out when the issue of job security was pending before a Commission of Inquiry appointed by the Government of India. They did so in connivance with officials of the State and Central Governments during President's Rule in West Bengal. The most passive attitude of the Union Labour Minister also encouraged the company to exploit the helpless condition of the employees.

Now that Caltex have re-opened the office and the Inquiry Commission has submitted its findings to the Government of India, the issue of job security should be re-opened to meet the demands of the oil workers in general and that of re-employment of the affected Caltex workers in particular.

S. S. Bose  
Action Committee of those affected  
by the "closure"  
Calcutta.

### Unfair Examination

Soon after the publication of the results of the 1968 M.A. examination in Political Science of

the Calcutta University serious charges of corruption, and favouritism were made by students as well as by several senior professors of the department and a prima facie case was established for a thorough enquiry. Even the Vice-Chancellor had to admit that the charges were not baseless. That is why all the answer scripts are said to be in his personal custody.

The percentage of failure—80%—exposes the utter bankruptcy and hollowness of the present educational system that operates in the interest of a privileged few and victimises the vast majority. We demand a total re-examination (not a sample analysis) of all answer scripts by teachers from universities outside West Bengal to be selected in consultation with the students. An enquiry commission must be set up to go into the various problems and difficulties of the students regarding syllabus, scholarships, and favouritism practised by the teacher-bureaucrats. Those found guilty should be suspended for a couple of years.

Standard text-books at cheap rates should be made available to the students as well as cyclostyled copies of the synopses of class lectures.

There have been efforts on the part of some bureaucrats in the department to threaten, bully and intimidate students for participating in the movement of protest. If these do not stop immediately, the consequences will be felt by the bureaucratic "authorities" of the university.

B. S.  
S. G.  
Calcutta

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### Correction

In last weeks' issue, Page 14, Col. 3 "To remove the defects and inequalities of bourgeois society." should read "To remove the defects and inequalities of socialist society."

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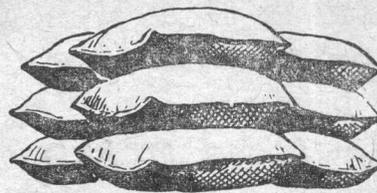


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