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## THE UNFOLDING PLAN

THE six-party combination, especially the CPM, has lost no time in claiming that the sudden dissolution of the West Bengal Assembly should go to its credit. Accustomed as they are to speak on behalf of the people, the Marxist leaders have hailed the dissolution as the first round of victory for the will of the people as expressed through the bandh of July 14. Nobody will grudge the CPM if it chooses to wallow in self-complacency, though that will be a pity. But dissolution of the Assembly was only a part, a minor part, of the demands in support of which the bandh was called. It was a means, not an end in itself; the Assembly was to be dissolved to clear the decks for an early mid-term poll. But the Centre is significantly silent on this question. Nor has it given any indication that it is prepared to concede other demands of the SPC, some of them far more urgent than dissolution of the Assembly, like withdrawal of the Central Reserve Police and holding the police in leash. These are demands over which even the eight-party combination did not dare to disagree, though it never gave up its unashamed equivocation over fresh elections. Of course, the earnestness behind a demand cannot be measured by the raucousness with which it is voiced—not after the CPM jitters over the timing of the mid-term poll in Kerala. One cannot be too sure now if the SPC will welcome unreservedly a few months hence a mid-term poll at short notice in West Bengal. Between the demand and its fulfilment may fall the shadow of fear of election reverses.

However, the CPM is likely to be spared this predicament in West Bengal. For all its gloating, the decision to dissolve the Assembly was taken by the Prime Minister independently of the CPM and the bandh sponsored by it. Mr P. Ramamurthi, CPM member of Parliament, who is said to be the party's contact-man in New Delhi, has claimed that he was expecting dissolution of the Assembly any day. If he is really such a knowledgeable person, he should have known also that the Centre has no intention to order a mid-term poll in the near future. Maybe, that is the reason why the party has talked of another round of struggle to wrest its demand. The Prime Minister has snubbed simultaneously the two communist parties; the CPM by refusing to announce an early poll and the CPI by dissolving the Assembly. Her

attitude to the CPM is understandable after the no-confidence debate in the Lok Sabha; on the same grounds she should have shown some consideration to the CPI which outdid all other parties, including her own, in mobilising its entire strength in defence of her government. She came down on her most loyal ally as it had hesitated to take the bait which was kept dangling in West Bengal for more than four months.

Dissolution of the Assembly is the second stage of the Prime Minister's master plan for West Bengal. The first, as she had announced in Calcutta, was to defer fresh elections indefinitely. That was a warning to the EPC which it did not heed or was too dense to grasp. Perhaps the CPI thought that the Prime Minister could not be so unresponsive to its good turn to her in Parliament as to refuse it some more time to get over its nervousness to form a ministry with the support of the Congress (R). But the Prime Minister proved once again that she could be ruthless in the pursuit of her own politics. A mini-front ministry propped up by her own party would have been meant for a short run as in Kerala; it would have withered away after paving the way for an electoral alliance to defeat the CPM in the next elections. As the EPC hesitated to take the plunge, she has turned the table on it by dissolving the Assembly and demolishing thereby the possibility of an immediate union of the EPC and the Bangla Congress. The EPC is more upset by this than by the prospect of the third stage of the Prime Minister's master plan, of unremitting repression to stifle dissent in the name of restoration of law and order. The EPC does not dare to confront the SPC without the crutch of the Bangla Congress; the panicky rush of its leaders to the durbar of Mr Sushil Dhara shows how outwitted it has been by the Prime Minister; it is prepared to recant to get the Bangla Congress in its fold, possibly with the Congress (R) in tow. The anti-Congressism of the EPC has nearly reached the vanishing point. The CPM also is playing her game by declaring a war of ex-

termination on the Naxalites, branding them all anti-socials and earning in the process a few kudos from Lalbazar. The Prime Minister has

succeeded in getting round both the EPC and the SPC; she has made so many marionettes of the redoubtable left parties of West Bengal.

## Phantoms In West Asia

We have not yet been flooded with reports that thousands of Egyptians paraded the streets of Cairo, dancing, singing and shouting "Nasser", "Nasser", after the Egyptian leader announced his unqualified and unconditional acceptance of the U.S.—and Russian—plan for West Asia. Of course the Arab Socialist Union and diverse other people have backed Nasser, crowing over what they call his brilliant diplomacy in putting the ball back in the Israeli court. It was not his diplomacy however, but that of Moscow where he spent almost three weeks discussing things with the poker-faced men of the Kremlin. It is naive to think that on the question of war and peace Nasser can decide on his own.

The U.S. plan amounts to a restoration of the cease-fire for at least a limited period (three months); talks under the auspices of Jarring between the UAR, Jordan and Israel with a view to reaching an agreement on the establishment of a just and lasting peace based on mutual acknowledgement by them of each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence; and (eventual) Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict, in accordance with the Security Council resolution (No. 242) of November, 1967.

This is the face of the plan. But there are snags. President Nasser thinks that it implies Israeli withdrawal from "all" occupied territories, a view which the Israelis do not accept. Mr Nixon, who is sometimes referred to as Tricky Dick, is reported to have assured Mrs Golda Meir that Washington remains firm that there should be no withdrawal until agreement is reached on a "just and lasting peace"; and that the U.S. will

maintain the military balance of power in the Middle East.

A cease-fire in itself may not be a sell-out. But acceptance of the American proposal has split the Arab world. Syria and Iraq have rejected it, the latter unequivocally. An influential Iraqi paper has called it the most sinister conspiracy against the Arabs. There have been big demonstrations in Syria. In Jordan, whose King accepted the plan after a stormy Cabinet meeting during which the pro-commando Ministers threatened to resign, the guerillas have criticised, for the first time, even Nasser.

Though the struggle of the homeless Palestinians and the interests of Arab regimes converged at many points after June 1967 and led to much closer armed collaboration, they are not identical. What the commandos want goes beyond the limited objective of the Arab regimes, which is recovery of territories lost in 1967. The commandos challenge the very basis on which Israel was formed. They want the establishment of a bi-national, Arab-Jewish State in place of the Zionist State that has uprooted millions of Arabs from their homeland and acts as a bridgehead for American imperialism in West Asia. Guerilla activities, moreover, have awakened a large number of people to the need for radical, egalitarian changes in the structure of their own societies—and this is a development which poses a potential threat to the ruling classes.

What has upset the more radical—or extremist—wing of the Palestine liberation front is the acceptance of Israel as a Zionist State by Cairo. The cease-fire will mean cessation of commando activities. All this cuts across their concept of a bi-national set-up. It may be argued that such a consummation, though devoutly wished, cannot be forced by arms, without the

co-operation of democratic forces in Israel itself. Contacts between the followers of Dr Habbash, of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Israeli Communist Party have been reported, but even the latter does not favour the idea of a bi-national State. However, the long-run hope is still there that compulsion of events would make the more far-sighted of the Jews realise that Israel cannot exist as a spearhead against the Arabs.

It remains to be seen whether Nasser and his friends—prompted by their mentors—would utilise the period of the cease-fire to crack down on the guerillas if they continue their activities. The Egyptian authorities have already silenced the two Palestinian commando radio stations in Cairo because they denounced the American plan. Algeria has warned of the consequences to the Arab world of a drive against the guerillas and refused to attend the Tripoli talks on the U.S. plan. Will a situation now develop in which there will be a civil war of sorts within a cease-fire? All the guerilla organisations are not united. Mr Arafat, leader of Al Fatah, the most important group, has been to Moscow. What the Russians said is not known. What is known is the deep Russian suspicion of the commandos who are getting training and aid from the Chinese and the move by Moscow-lining Arab communists to enter the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

If Nasser decides to curb the guerillas, he will cut the ground from under his own feet. For, despite all the talk about the famous trial of strength between American Phantoms and Russian Sams, and the U.S. supply of sophisticated electronic equipment to Israel, it is the self-confidence, self-reliance, courage and will of the people which matter in the long run. Cairo should know that the Russians will never go beyond a point in West Asia—and the point these days is decided through Washington-Moscow consultations. All those rumours about how close

the missile sites are being brought to the Canal, whether Nixon will release more Phantoms to restore the balance of military power, are meant to confound the innocent and create the impression that the world belongs to the super-powers. If these sophisticated beauties in the mighty ha-

rems of armament, nabobs could win against liberation forces, Vietnam would have gone under, long ago. Indeed, many phantoms, other than American, are being let loose among the Arabs to destroy their unity and to keep their countries as client States.

## Better Than SEATO

Late last month yet another attempt to rig up an Asian military pact against communism turned abortive. That SEATO for all intents and purposes is dead was driven home after its ministerial conference in Manila in early July. At the conference watchdogs of the Free World in Asia barked a lot but could not agree to bite the communists. Instead the final communiqué called for a political settlement of the Cambodian crisis. But the inveterate cold warriors, fed on heavy Dullesian diet, were never quite reconciled to the deflation of SEATO or to Nixon's "low profile." Following Nguyen Cao Ky's air dash to Bangkok where he discussed the idea of an Indo-Chinese military pact against "communist subversion", Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn announced that both Saigon and Phnom Penh had already approved the basic features of the proposed pact which was put forward by Thailand. This pact, Thanom hoped, would be "an effective alternative to the South-East Asia Treaty Organization in stopping communist aggression".

But after a week of hectic talks and visits the idea of a military pact was laid to rest. On his return from Bangkok late last month General Lon Nol was almost shocked when a question was put about the pact. He took great pains to explain that "a pact would be contrary to our present status of neutrality". The shocked innocence of the Thai Foreign Minister, Thanat Khoman, was no less amusing. He blandly denied that Thailand had ever cherished any idea about a military pact with neighbouring Indo-Chinese States. After all it

was not, as he said, "practical". President Thieu of South Vietnam also discovered that the idea of a military pact was unrealistic.

What actually brought about this reversal of views about a military pact is not known for certain. But from what the Americans and their minions have been saying and doing it seems they have come to realise the folly of ganging up publicly and under a formal alliance. While such a formal pact would provoke the hostility of all progressive people of the member countries and abroad it would also involve delay and often inaction by making decisions dependent on consensus. The most crucial consideration, of course, is the absence of the U.S. from the treaty. Unless the Boss in Washington formally agrees to underwrite the expenses of the pact it is impossible for those dependent on the American dole to help each other. And with the current mood of Congress Nixon finds it very difficult to become the patron of a new military grouping. Hence the need for a "low profile" and hush-hush military supplies to their puppets in Asia. After all what is the need of a formal military alliance when its purpose is being served by other means?

The Americans and their Saigon puppets are quietly digging their heels in Cambodia for a long stay. U.S. diplomatic relation with Cambodia has been raised to ambassadorial level. To conduct military operations an American special war expert has set up a permanent camp in Phnom Penh. While Cambodian troops are being equipped and trained by South Vietnamese and Thais

(of course, at American expense) their own troops are ravaging the Cambodian countryside. Cambodian jets are being serviced in Thailand. American, Thai and South Vietnamese planes continue to bomb and strafe Cambodian peasants at will. Thailand is also planning to boost

its ammunition production to meet the increased demand in Indo-China. America is too far away to meet emergency demands. So a low profile, informal gang-up is much more realistic and practical than a mini-SEATO.

committal sketching of thoughts. The more important points of the Bahr paper are promoting the normalisation of the situation in Europe based on the existing real situation and regarding as inviolable the present borders of all countries in Europe, including the Oder-Neisse and the border between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. The CDU has criticised the Government for the haste with which the Bahr paper was produced, but polemics apart there is little difference in their attitudes. While the CDU wants the ratification of an agreement on the renunciation of force to synchronise with progress in the four-power talks on Berlin, the Government maintains that the agreement cannot lead to an independent political entity of West Berlin. The two agree that an agreement with Russia must not compromise the Federal Government's position vis-a-vis the GDR. Herr Brandt has helped Herr Scheel to overcome the main hurdle by refusing to be confined in the straitjacket of a rigid relationship between progress in the four-power talks and Moscow parleys. The Government must, however, take the opposition in confidence as it would be at least ten votes short of majority were it to ask the Bundestag to ratify the treaty.

## European Security

The Russian suavity towards the NATO member States promises an era of growing cooperation in different fields between the two blocs. Nothing will be done which may disturb the status quo and the few pricks that are still there will be treated with balm. More than the expectation of the NATO allies, the Budapest statement of the Warsaw Pact partners gave away a number of vital concessions. Moscow has anticipated well the Western response to the proposed European security conference. It was known that such a conference could advance beyond the contemplatory stage only if American and Canadian participation were acceptable. Moscow had never categorically rejected the request of the West European States for the participation of the two countries, but did not expect Russia to give in so soon. Previously the Russian position was that American participation would be decided by the conference itself, but now, according to the Warsaw Pact members, the problem has been cleared up. The proposal that a reduction of foreign armed forces stationed on the territory of European countries be discussed by a committee to be set up by the projected conference is a concession of considerable moment. NATO wants balanced and mutual reductions of all the forces in central Europe. Still it may find the Warsaw Pact proposal acceptable, for it offers the unique opportunity of counting Russian troops in Czechoslovakia. Russia would not mind eating this humble pie so long as her own territory remains beyond the scope of inspection.

The agenda for the conference would be made flexible. The scope for cultural cooperation would be discussed alongside economic, financial and technological ties.

The Russo-German talks on the renunciation of force now in progress in Moscow mark a major success for Brandt's Ostpolitik. This has been possible due to Russia's accommodation. The Kremlin leaders have seen to it that nothing is said (there is practically no Press coverage of the visit of Mr Walter Scheel) which may be taken advantage of by the Christian Democratic opposition in Bonn. The June leak of the Bahr paper in the *Quick* magazine has not only caused embarrassment to Chancellor Brandt but made negotiations with Moscow somewhat difficult. What was at first described in Bonn as almost ready for signature is now referred to as a non-

## Doctors In Cease-Work

*A correspondent writes:*

Afflicted by poor health services in West Bengal, for which presumably the Government is responsible, and by physical assaults, for which the common people definitely are, a section of doctors spearheaded by the West Bengal branch of the Indian Medical Association observed a day's cease-work on August 1. It was not, however, the doctors on strike said, directed against the Government or against the people. Was it then, like art for art's sake, for the sheer beauty of a cease-work?

The IMA always came in the

limelight whenever there was a case of assault on doctors and recorded its protest. On the other hand, it is not known that it has any substantial programme for improving the State health services. So it can be imagined that the cease-work was primarily a protest against people who choose to beat up doctors for mismanagement in hospitals, its concern for health services being some sort of padding to make the cease-work justification more weighty.

The doctors should not be made scapegoats for governmental deficiencies. On this there can be no two

opinions. But are the doctors, under all circumstances, angels? A section of the IMA, who opposed the cease-work, says that in many cases patients or their relatives could have been checked from becoming violent if the doctors concerned were guided by understanding rather than by hauteur. Considering the deplorable situation in the country where medical service has been reduced to a farce, assaults should be considered as another symptom of a crying malady. There can be no summary injunction against patients, who in times of illness, look to doctors as saviours and not merely as government officers.

The cease-work call appeared to be ill-considered not because it could neither improve the health services nor prevent future assaults, but because of the presumption that the doctors can live free from the climate of strife and violence that prevails today in the country. More because the IMA has nothing to say against the harassment of students, nurses and doctors by the police, against the CRP marauding even in labour wards, as for example recently in the R. G. Kar Medical College, against pre-dawn swoops on medical hostels and picking up of students on comic suspicions or against the conversion of hospitals into a sort of cantonment. If it had, there should have been no occasion to forcibly close R. G. Kar and Nilratan Medical Colleges

The cease-work call was in fact not due to the irresistible exasperation of beaten up doctors but to a bid by the CPI and CPM to capture the IMA. The CPI made the cease-work a prestige issue, but so far as reports go, its call for the cease-work met with poor response. But its undeterred propaganda machine, completely divorced from reality, is making a big thing out of a flop; so much so that it thinks that patients fully cooperated with the doctors by not coming to the outdoor hospitals! There seems to have been a full change of heart in the patients, against whom the call was given!

## View from Delhi

### Third Force Strategy

FROM A POLITICAL  
CORRESPONDENT

WHEN politics operates at the lowest level (of least common multiple), a no-confidence motion like the one rejected by the Lok Sabha last week can hardly provide an edifying debate. Those who deplore the tone of the debate should know that preoccupation with refinement in politics is a petty bourgeois fad. Mrs Indira Gandhi might have secured for herself a flattering margin in the division but those who voted for the no-confidence motion have no reason to despair. Of the mud they had slung, enough had stuck. More, the ruling party while whistling in the dark, cannot dismiss the Grand Alliance as a shadow front. The trepid, nervous scurrying in the wake of the debate would testify to that.

It is political arithmetic and nothing else. The three parties of the projected Grand Alliance voted together. Two left parties which had hitherto betrayed reservations about voting against the Government did vote against Mrs Gandhi this time. Another party, regarded as an extension of the ruling party, stayed neutral if only to prove that even the worm turns. The spurious theory of polarisation of left and democratic forces around Mrs Gandhi's party, peddled by the CPI, stands debunked. The SSP and the CPI(M) are certainly more leftist than their pathetic opposite numbers in Mrs Gandhi's camp—the PSP and the CPI. So the Congress split does not represent the left-right polarisation in any sense. There are enough rightist and communal forces on Mrs Gandhi's side.

The SSP-CPI(M) axis emerging in Parliament might turn out to be the hard core of a third force, independent of the two Congress parties and their satellites. This is what Mrs Gandhi and her advisers seem to be worried about. So the day after

the vote on the no-confidence motion her hatchetmen got busy selling a new theory, on the need to win back the healthy elements of the SSP, the CPI(M) and the PSP which in short means splitting these parties on the issue of support to Mrs Gandhi. When the PSP-SSP merger talks are in an advanced stage, Mr Jagjivan Ram writes a letter to the PSP Chairman, Mr N. G. Goray suggesting resumption of the "meaningful dialogue" his party has had in the past with the PSP. Almost simultaneously a story datelined Calcutta appears in a pro-Moscow newspaper insinuating a deal between Mr Bijoy Singh Nahar and the CPI(M) in West Bengal. Mr Siddharta Shankar Ray denied the story vehemently but he could not explain the fact that the story appeared in the paper considered to be friendliest to the Prime Minister.

The ruling Congress survives in office at the Centre on the support of the DMK, the CPI and nondescript parties like the Bangla Congress and the BKD, and the neutrality of boneless wonders like the PSP. If the third force led by the SSP-CPI(M) gathers more adherents and becomes a rallying point, both the Congress parties would have to look to this force for an adjustment. But the manoeuvres of the SSP leader, Mr George Fernandes, are not very comprehensible. When the Grand Alliance idea was mooted, Mr Fernandes is known to have met Mr Y. B. Chavan who is believed to have promised to "defect" with about 75 MPs the moment the Grand Alliance is able to prove a strength of 180. Mr Chavan might deny this but the story has gained wide credence because his behaviour now is very predictable. He is busy building bridges with the Syndicate and no wonder Mr Fernandes was meaning Mr Chavan when he said that a member of the present Cabinet would be the Prime Minister when Mrs Gandhi is toppled.

#### Kerala Elections

The Kerala elections have lent a sense of urgency to the problem of

strategy for various parties. The CPI was keen on an early election so that it could keep its leverage intact. But things may not go to its plan. The Parliamentary Board of the ruling party did not declare its strategy because it wants maximum manoeuvrability. The Governor, Mr Viswanathan, is known to have told Mrs Gandhi that if Mr Achutha Menon has to head the next ministry, Kerala should have a poll in September. Mrs Gandhi was prepared to permit an early poll but there are second thoughts about allowing Mr Achutha Menon to become the Chief Minister once again. The High Command discussed two options—alliances with parties of the mini-front or an adjustment with the mini-front as a whole. This implies rejection of the theoretical option of contesting all the seats on its own. The Congress is trying for a compact of itself, the rebel Kerala Congress and the PSP and clandestine adjustment with the Muslim League. This combination amounts to liquidating the mini-front and isolating the CPI. There is a fair chance of such a combination getting a majority or near-majority. The CPI(M), on the other hand, can meet this challenge effectively if it comes to a deal with the SSP and the Syndicate Congress. On the whole the CPI stands to lose most if either of the combinations takes shape.

Much as Mrs Gandhi wants to win the Kerala elections for her party she has to take several factors into account before striking a direct or indirect deal with the Muslim League. Any truck with the League would cost her in the Hindi belt later what she stands to gain immediately in Kerala. The CPI(M) appears unprepared for the poll in September but it is certain it will not do too badly in terms of votes and seats. But the basic question whether it should contest the poll which it says is rigged remains to be decided. Hardliners in the Politbureau, Mr B. T. Rana-dive to be precise, are against participation in a rigged poll. There is tremendous pressure from the West Bengal leadership of the party also

against participation. But Mr E. M. S. Namboodiripad has tried to forestall the Politbureau even before it meets to decide the issue. He has launched a drive through the party journal *Deshabhimani* for election funds. The Politbureau will now find it hard not to decide in favour of contesting the elections.

As of now, the ruling Congress is not averse to ditching the CPI in Kerala and making overtures to the Marxists and propping soft-liners in the party like Mr Jyoti Basu and Mr

Namboodiripad. The CPI is desperately attempting to stall this plan. Immediately after the mid-term poll in West Bengal, a certain Central Minister, then close to the Prime Minister, was claiming the allegiance of over 40 CPI(M) MLAs. The same Minister appeared to have been chosen for a similar mission. The timing of the West Bengal elections (if they are to be held before 1972) will depend on the pattern of alliances in Kerala.

August 2, 1970

## West Bengal : On The Eve ?

SUMANTA BANERJEE

**T**O speak of West Bengal today, as though she has hurtled from a heavenly abode of long and peaceful prosperity into the quagmire of lawlessness, is patently absurd. For the vast mass of Bengalis, law and order had ceased to exist long ago.

For the thousands of pavement dwellers of Calcutta whom the Government could not provide with any decent accommodation, the rule of law meant being kicked about by the police from one place to another. To about two-thirds of the people of Calcutta who live in slums and kutch buildings, law was a stubborn stone wall unresponsive to their complaints about water and sanitary facilities. In the minds of about 20 lakh unemployed of West Bengal, law and order was represented by a Government which failed to give them jobs and hounded them out of society. For the thousands of landless labourers and small peasants in the countryside, law and order was the village jotedar who with impunity could cheat them of their dues and kill them when they grew a bit restless.

What is happening today in West Bengal is only a logical culmination of this long history of lawlessness. Those who cry themselves hoarse about the deterioration of law and order in West Bengal now, looked com-

placently these 22 years upon the murder and harassment of innocent people. They are today convulsed by the horror of retaliation, by the desecration of the old order.

The old order is crumbling in West Bengal. The chaos is beginning to take shape. No amount of aid for the development of Calcutta or assurance of land reforms to ameliorate the lot of the Bengali peasant can turn back the hands of the clock. The very fact that a regime is trying to make reforms and grant concessions, encourages demands for still more changes which can easily snowball into a revolutionary movement. As Alexis de Tocqueville once said: "the most perilous moment for a bad government is one when it seeks to mend its ways." (*The Old Regime and the French Revolution*).

The basis of the old order in West Bengal, as in the rest of India, was the bureaucracy and the police. A succession of events has eroded the people's illusion about the first and fear of the second.

The myth that the Indian administrative service, created in the tradition of the British civil service, is a non-partisan efficient machinery, was long ago exploded in West Bengal, when people saw how officialdom

cringingly served the Congress party. But the experience of the United Front regime helped them to realise that this classic frame of bourgeois administration—the well-knit and disciplined bureaucracy—was also susceptible to cracks. Being basically mercenaries, the officials were naturally torn between loyalties under a multi-party government. Transfers, promotions, supersessions by Ministers to serve their respective party interests, created among the officials a scramble for currying favour with different parties, leading inevitably to dissensions. By the time the UF Government collapsed, the bureaucracy was in a shambles.

Neither President's rule nor the appointment of five advisers to keep the Governor in control could tone up the administration. A few examples would suffice. The Jalpaiguri district administration took over fifteen days to make up its mind as to who had the right to take down a red flag hoisted atop the Jalpaiguri Government Engineering College. The District Magistrate of Murshidabad dubbed "silly" the West Bengal Inspector General of Police's order to have walls cleared of Maoist slogans. (*The Statesman*, June 20, 1970). Mrs Gandhi's own Congress in West Bengal had come out with a resolution (June 5) demanding the removal of her representative, Mr Dhavan, from the State.

A look at the situation in the police force would also show that it is no longer what it used to be. The State's police intelligence, built up over years of effort, steeled in hounding militant nationalists during the British regime and Leftists after independence, seems to have lost its old touch. The Naxalites can elude them for days together.

The CPI(M)-led Home Ministry during the UF regime announced a changed police policy. Although it could not change the police, it was able to some extent to curb its might by rendering it impotent during strikes and land troubles. The dis-

sensions among the officials of different departments also contributed to the laxity in the force.

To cap it all came the Naxalite attacks. Terrorism is effective not against the strong, but against the vulnerable. Reduced by internal dissensions and confusion to a state of disorder, the police force in West Bengal became vulnerable to Naxalite attacks. The assassination of informers, sporadic murders of police officers, and the destructive effects of bombs standing out in sharp contrast with the insipid Kali puja crackers used previously by the Leftists, have created panic among the personnel who are afraid of moving out alone in uniform.

#### Helplessness

Here is a candid admission of the helplessness and isolation of the police. After the killing of a plainclothes policeman in Taltala, Calcutta, on June 15. The then Police Commissioner, Mr P. K. Sen, referring to the incident, told reporters that "such attacks on policemen might affect the morale of the police force. He regretted that though the day's incident took place in daylight, no one from the public raised any alarm. Even after the incident, people of the locality, who must have witnessed the murder, were not coming forward to assist the police in detecting murderers, Mr Sen complained." (*The Statesman*, June 16).

If the recent police claims of public cooperation in apprehending the Naxalites are true, we may surmise that the communist revolutionaries in the cities are losing public sympathy by turning their attention from the police to targets like schools and post-offices.

In spite of such claims, it had to be admitted during talks with the Union Home Secretary, Mr L. P. Singh, and police officials in Calcutta that "the local police did not seem to have been very successful in meeting the Naxalite threat." (*The Statesman*, July 18). It was decided

therefore to make better utilisation of the Border Security Force and the Central Reserve Police.

But the emphasis on outsiders like the CRP is adding to the process of disintegration. The CRP, drawn from different States, is gradually usurping the West Bengal police's duties. The sight of non-Bengali policemen beating up the Bengali population is creating exactly the same feeling among the masses in West Bengal, which the National Integration Council presided over by Mrs Gandhi seeks to eradicate. The Centre's reluctance to replace the Shiv Sena and the RSS-riddled police force of Maharashtra by the CRP or outsiders, to suppress communal riots there, stands out in sharp contrast with its readiness in sending the CRP to suppress political trouble in West Bengal. If after some time, the people of West Bengal renounce their obligation to national integration, one should not be surprised.

#### Eroded From Within

Thus a combination of various circumstances has succeeded to some extent in undermining the people's faith in the bourgeois state machinery—a necessary step for the final breakdown of the state structure. Paradoxically enough, the smashing of the bourgeois state apparatus, a prerequisite for the establishment of a socialist state, was set in motion in West Bengal even before the beginning of a socialist revolution. The apparatus is being eroded from within. The ruling class finds it increasingly difficult to develop effective weapons to use within its own diseased vital organs.

The Chinese view that an excellent revolutionary situation exists in India is a grossly exaggerated picture. But it may be partly applicable to West Bengal, as far as the administrative machinery of the ruling class is concerned.

Such being the situation, how are the Leftist forces taking advantage of it? The parliamentary Leftist par-

ties are thinking in terms of forming another United Front government. Judging from past experience, it is natural to presume that whichever front—whether the EPC or the Six Party Combination or a coalition of both—comes to power, it will have to take over the crumbling administrative system and being wedded to the Constitution, will have to work with it. The Marxist Communists who believe in “wrecking the Constitution from within” may try to reduce the powers of the executive further and render the police force more impotent.

The same pattern of developments marking the last UF Government will be repeated in a more aggravated form. The longer a united front stays in power, the more grievances and conflicts among their supporters accumulate and the more likely they are to be thrown out of office. This fate can be avoided or delayed only by the continuing mobilisation of new supporters. This is precisely what the CPI(M) sought to do and thus, got involved in inter-party clashes.

By appealing to peasants and workers, the UF parties enhanced the latter's expectations of reforms in social welfare, industries and land, but because of the limitations of working within the Constitution and adhering to the legal obligations, they indirectly bred at the same time dissensions between worker and worker, peasant and peasant.

#### “Class Conflicts”

However much the CPI(M) leaders may seek to describe the clashes as “class conflicts”, they were in essence fratricidal disputes. In the agrarian sector for instance, the clashes developed over land distribution. As the amount of land in West Bengal was limited, it led to a scramble among many over small plots. Each party tried to see that its followers got enough land to justify their faith in the party leadership. The CPI(M), being the biggest party and holding the Land and Land Revenue portfolio, made the best of a bad si-

tuation. They sought to grab land not only from jotedars but also from those landless who were given land by rival parties, thus creating the impression in the countryside that only those following the Marxists could retain their lands.

The fratricidal nature of the clashes in the countryside was borne out by the very figures supplied by the CPI(M). Its West Bengal State Committee came out with a statement on October 19 last year noting that since the installation of the UF Government till that date there were 48 political murders of which 26 were killed in inter-party clashes. It added that of these only nine were “killed in attacks by jotedars and Congress supporters.” (*The Statesman*, October 29, 1969). While these nine were clearly victims of class conflict, how would the Marxists describe the fate of the rest? Did the landless followers of the CPI, Forward Bloc or SUC who were engaged in clashes with their counterparts in the CPI(M), belong to an exploiting class?

The CPI(M) sought to achieve exactly what the Congress did in West Bengal during the last two decades. It put its own men in responsible positions of official and semi-official organisations without changing the basic bureaucratic character of these bodies, distributed favours among its rank and file at the expense of others and swelled its ranks by attracting hired hoodlums who were used to finish off rivals in the fields. The explanation often given is that the party has to resort to these tactics to extend its base and capture power. The danger inherent in such an expediency is that in a crisis a base built up in this manner is likely to collapse. Whether the CPI(M) base is solid enough to resist a ruthless onslaught by the ruling class can only be tested in case of a confrontation.

The other important parliamentary Leftist party, the CPI, is merely participating in the bourgeois democratic movement unleashed by Mrs Gandhi to bring about certain chan-

ges in the present set-up without any basic desire to destroy the set-up and start from scratch. Its call for land occupation is, as admitted by the party leaders, a movement to implement the very measures promised by Mrs Gandhi on several occasions but frustrated by the State governments. It has accepted land reforms as a democratic programme with the limited objective of establishing peasant farming instead of a socialist programme of cooperativisation and collectivisation.

Thus two alternatives are offered to West Bengal today by the parliamentary Leftists. One is by the CPI(M) which is aiming at building up its party by any means—apolitical economism, unscrupulous expediency, utilization of the corrupt bourgeois State machinery even at the risk of being devoured by it—with the objective of capturing State power in some distant future. The other is by the CPI which is urging the masses to join the socio-economic mainstream released by the ruling Congress at the Centre and to gradually steer it towards a more Leftist course. Both the CPI and the CPI(M) are thus participating in the socio-economic and political functions of the bourgeois State, although with different aims and objectives.

#### Third Path

The third alternative is provided by communist revolutionaries who are outside the pale of constitutional politics. In spite of differences among themselves as to the tactics to be adopted, they have a few things in common—an almost blind faith in Mao's thoughts, assessment of the Indian ruling class as semi-feudal and semi-colonial and belief in armed revolution.

While the CPI(ML) group of these revolutionaries are spurning all mass fronts and concentrating on agrarian guerilla actions and individual terrorism, the other group, more aligned to Mr Nagi Reddy of Andhra, and with less following in West Bengal, emphasises the need for working in trade unions and kisan fronts to win over the masses for the future revolution.



The CPI(ML) tactics in the countryside might yield some results. When the landless labourer realises not only that he is suffering but that something can be done about this suffering, nothing becomes more revolutionary than this awareness. The awareness in the countryside of West Bengal is a recent phenomenon—an outcome of various factors including the Naxalbari uprising in 1967, the serious attention to land reforms in its wake and the promises and achievements of the United Front Government in the agrarian sector. The CPI(ML) is trying to turn the tide of this rural fervour into more revolutionary channels with the aim of breaking once for all the feudal relations in the villages and setting up free zones. Individual terrorism in this context may serve a purpose for some time. Trotsky defending Red Terror said: "It kills individuals and intimidates thousands." ("Dictatorship versus Democracy"). The killing of a hated moneylender or a jotedar might embolden the usually frightened agricultural labourer to further actions. When he boils over in revolt against the privileged in his village, the result is hardly likely to be a copy-book revolution, but a destructive and bloody jacquerie. Somewhere along the line this kind of blind, anarchic protest might give way to classic organised revolution, if the political leadership is able to elevate individual terrorism to heights of mass action.

But the violence that may be necessary in the villages, if repeated in the same manner in the urban areas, may antagonise potential allies. A daring attack on a police station or a government office some months ago served its purpose by undermining the faith of the people in the Government's power to resist. But the recent sporadic bomb outrages or arson on educational institutions, post offices and hospitals may alienate the common people. Burning of books does not smack of a communist revolution. Nor do attacks on ambulance vans or hospitals.

The explanation often given—that

the hit-and-run tactics in Calcutta are adopted to pin down the police in the city and prevent them from going to the villages to suppress the movement there—has little basis. Calcutta police, in spite of their failure, are still left to themselves. There has been no report of diversion of the West Bengal police from the districts to help the Calcutta police. Nor have the district police sought the help of the Calcutta police to track down the Naxalites.

We are thus left with two explanations. First the sporadic raids on schools and colleges could be aimed at gaining publicity the next day in the bourgeois press and laurels from Radio Peking which is ready to describe any riot in India, even the violent procession organised by cow-protectors in Delhi, as a "spark of the revolution inspired by Mao's thoughts."

Secondly, they could be mere tailing after the lumpen-proletariat's existing values and life-styles. This class—"the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society" (*Communist Manifesto*)—is gradually expanding in Calcutta, thanks to the economic crisis. Almost every Bengali middle-class family today has a member—either a teenager, a drop-out from school or college, or an unemployed youth—who is known in local parlance as a "goonda."

While Marx noted their dangerous character, he was also aware of their revolutionary potentialities. He found them "at their youthful age thoroughly malleable, as capable of the most heroic deeds and the most exalted sacrifices as of the basest banditry and the foulest corruption." (*Class Struggle in France, 1848-50*).

If therefore this available reserve of human energy is not immediately organised by the CPI(ML), it will find itself fighting on the side of counter-revolution. If one mistakes their violence for revolution and worships the spontaneity of the lumpen-proletariat, he should be reminded of the Brown Shirts.

But it is perhaps futile to remind the CPI(ML) leadership of past

dangers. It is displaying the same familiar traits, common to the Indian communist movement—intolerance of friendly criticism, fanatical worship of some foreign communist authority (Mao in this case) bureaucratic behaviour in inner-party struggle, and indulging in an orgy of re-primination against communists outside the sanctified circle of the CPI(ML). This attitude of the leadership has bred among the young rank and file, a sincere and honest lot, the insecure pugnacity of the self-taught.

Perhaps the Indian communists are the Bourbons of the world communist movement—they forget nothing; they learn nothing either.

The present situation in West Bengal provides the communist revolutionaries of all shades an excellent opportunity for creating objective conditions for a revolutionary upsurge. But it is crying for the unity of the communists. The CPI(ML) being the most radical and influential of the Marxist parties, must shed its sectarianism and work for unity. It should also try to draw in the sincere rank and file of the two parliamentary communist parties—the CPI and the CPI(M)—who are undergoing an agonising process of heart-searching at the present moment and are beginning to question the policies of their leadership in many places.

But to be in a position to forge this unity, the CPI(ML) itself should undergo a sort of catharsis. Hero-worshipping must come to an end. Stress should be given more on a scientific study of the objective conditions rather than wishful exaggerations. Mass fronts should not be spurned.

If West Bengal's communist revolutionaries fail to take advantage of the present situation in the State and coordinate their tactics in the countryside with suitable forms of action in the urban areas, they will only dissipate their fervour in futile outbursts which will add yet another painful chapter to the annals of abortive insurrections in this unhappy State.

# Patterns Of Servility

ARJUN BARUI

WHO are the patriots in modern India? Those who supposedly follow an alien ideology, or those who rule from the secretariats in Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta or the seats of Sankaracharya and Rabindranath?

The political record of our upper classes does not bear any close scrutiny; our native princes kept their wealth and their often disgusting life-styles by selling out to the British and betraying millions of their countrymen at the earliest opportunity. Our top civil servants served their British masters and the independent realm of India with equal fervour. Some of them like Sir C. D. Deshmukh even attained key positions of power under the new regime. No hardships, no risks ever taken and yet the accession of even more power after independence—what a lark!

It is not only our upper civil servants who collaborated: the first Nehru Memorial Lecture was delivered, with the blessing and the active help of the Government of India, under the auspices of the Trinity College, Cambridge, by Lord Butler—a man who had been a Minister in pre-war Tory governments, which had been known to be implacably opposed to the idea of Indian independence. Various members of the Nehru family were present to pay compliments to Lord Butler and to 'Uncle Harcourt'—Sir Harcourt Butler, who had been Governor of the United Provinces and had sent the Nehrus to jail. To an outsider it was an amazing instance of forgiveness. But really it was all in the family: the Indian upper classes were patronised by the British and lionised by the deluded Indian masses at the same time. You need a special sort of sympathy to appreciate the cleverness of the whole affair.

The cultural values of most of our rulers at various levels are based on the implicit acceptance of the superiority of the white man: sometimes, as in the case of Shri Nirad C. Chaudhuri, there is a misguided iden-

tification of the Indians with the Aryans—the master race of them all. More often, the admiration does not need any real reciprocation at present or any roots in (mythical) history.

In independent India, titles conferred by foreign governments are supposed to have become defunct. And yet, we all know a captain of industry and all that, who is still referred to as 'Sir so and so'. We also know a patron of Indian arts who is still 'Lady so and so.' The descendant of the only Indian ever to be made a peer of the United Kingdom continues to be referred to as 'Lord so and so', although he is reported to have chosen Indian citizenship. At a still humbler level, the director of an institution for training labour welfare officers still flaunts a pathetic OBE after his name. Our commercial leaders, of course, recognise the value of British titles: a board of directors is not really glamorous enough if it does not include a knight or two.

Our upper classes carry their servile imitation of the white man into their drawing rooms, their linguistic habits, and their schemes of education for the young. When there is a strong and ever-growing demand for doing away with 'public schools' (which are really private, as opposed to publicly controlled, schools) in Britain, in our country paltry copies of such schools for boys and girls are doing a roaring business. The products of these schools are usually callow young men perfectly conscious of their superiority to other Indians, particularly those who are not properly endowed with brass, and perfectly incapable of any self-denying decision in a national crisis. The bridegrooms from our upper classes are not usually happy unless they can take 'convent-educated' girls for their wedded wives, nor do parents of these brides feel confident of securing a financially sound son-in-law unless

they can send their daughters to these 'convents'.

## Foreign Degree

The education of an upper class Indian male is not considered complete unless he has visited a British or American (or in a few cases, German) seat of learning. Despite the humiliations suffered by Indian students at the hands of the civilised British gangsters, landlords and landladies, and despite the exorbitant fees charged to overseas students by British universities, the latter are still inundated with Indian applications for admission. Our financial controllers have dutifully inherited the British styles of snobbery: at a time when foreign exchange grants for Indian students were extremely restricted, special exemptions were granted to those who were admitted to Oxford or Cambridge. The hearts of Lord Macaulay and Benjamin would have been warmed by the natives thus aping all the vicious tricks of the English 'gentleman' (a rapidly vanishing breed, alas!)

## Businessmen

Indian businessmen abroad (and at home) have often served the British lion as the scouting jackals, supplying provisions to the marauding British armies, sometimes financing the conquering operations of the British raj, setting up shops and money-lenders' business, and acting as the intermediaries between the white exploiters and the exploited Africans (and Indian labourers). Their contempt for the 'black-skinned' African was often more intense than that of the British because they were only the tools of a superior authority. When east African nations became independent, all Indian immigrants had to suffer for the cravenness and arrogance of the Indian businessmen and the Indian professional personnel. The upper class Indians did not, however, understand the meaning of the

political liberation of Africa or the intensification of racism in the capitalist countries which white men continued to rule. They chose to identify themselves as 'British citizens', pathetically expecting the British imperialists to repay them for their past 'loyalty' and their dishonourable role in the rape of the east (and south) Africa. When the British Government, not unexpectedly, refused to honour their obligation, they managed to pass the buck on to the Indian Government: our top politicians and civil servants knuckled under and only made weak-kneed 'protests' to Westminster. Thus the servility of our upper class at home and abroad has enabled the British Government to get away with one of the most blatantly racist policies of dual citizenship in the world.

Indians and Pakistanis now daily meet indignity and worse in the streets, seaports, airports, shops, factories and offices of Britain. Even trade unions are infected by racism: when Indian workers in Southall officially struck work, the regional body of the Trades Union Congress refused to support them financially, thus going against all the principles and practices of fraternal support by trade unions in Britain. What is the reaction of our upper classes to all this? Most of their members continue to try to go there to earn money and to acquire commercially valuable degrees, and simply endure the insults as being all in the day's work. Some take an ostrich-like attitude, and refuse to identify their own honour with the honour of the poorer-paid coloured immigrants. Some exclaim, "Oh well, many of the Indo-Pakistani workers are illiterate and dirty and you can't expect the civilised white men to treat them as equals". Some discover suddenly that Britain's population problem is worse than that of India and Pakistan and sympathise with her racist immigration policy. And, of course, since they are educated, they express these priceless sentiments in letters to the *Times*, exciting the contemptuous hilarity of Englishmen.

### Maltreated But Proud

These sentiments are echoed in various forms by commentators in India. The same correspondent of *The Statesman* who vividly described the humiliations suffered by coloured immigrants (including himself) at the hands of racist immigration officials at the Heathrow airport (London) could, only a few weeks later, write sagely that we should still retain our 'special' connection with Britain for the sake of trade and aid. It is, of course, characteristic of the primitive capitalist mentality to believe that there is a market price for everything, including perhaps the honour of our countrymen. The correspondent of *The Statesman* does not probably know that even now Britain's relationship with India is economically exploitative. Britain continues to reap huge profits from old enterprises in India which serve as admirable siphons for exporting capital from India under various guises. Our exports to Britain have expanded very slowly. In the name of advanced technology we have been sold many pups and many decrepit machines by British firms. If we take all the repatriation of private capital and project from India on account of British (or Indo-British firms) we probably have a sizable deficit on capital account, in spite of the much-vaunted aid given by the British Government. Yet the correspondent would maintain our 'special relationship'—for the glory of the Queen and the comfort and the cultural snobbery of his friends, perhaps?

Of course, the servility of our upper classes to Britain and to the new master—Uncle Sam—is not an expression of some completely irrational will to be enslaved. They need the artificial props of the Anglo-American culture, and the very tangible pounds and dollars, and the ironmongery for their army, in order to feel secure in this increasingly rebellious land. Indian upper-class characters (particularly the ones who obtained the light of Western education) never had the chance to develop an indigenous cul-

ture, properly speaking. When they chide the younger people for ingratitude or worse, what are they going to show? If Sir Asutosh Mukherjee is the utmost limit of independence in the educational sphere that our rulers can boast of, then one can pardon the younger people for not taking the oldsters at their own valuation.

When the Americans became the new masters of the capitalist world, it was rather easy for our rulers to adjust to the new dispensation. The language was common (in spite of the crack of Oscar Wilde to the contrary). And the Americans overseas often like to imitate the British overseas. They might do it rather badly, but some American firms in Calcutta, for example, still insist on their officers wearing suits in office, which is fine for the average Indian wanting a career in commercial firms. And Americans can patronise with enormous 'research' funds (not like the impoverished shopkeeper mentality displayed by British organisations). So when both Lakshmi and Saraswati can be apparently appeased by serving the Americans, why should the average Indian academic or journalist or accountant hesitate? Also, thanks to the brilliance with which we have managed to antagonise every one of our neighbouring lands, it might even be considered 'positive' to be friendly with the Americans—our ultimate protectors against usurpation by communists. One of our most outstanding patriots, General Chaudhuri—the hero of Goa, Hyderabad and Sialkot—has considered it eminently honourable to accept American money for carrying out research at Montreal. But unsympathetic (and disorderly!) Canadian students found this somehow objectionable. Those who clamour for the 'discipline' of military rule for our country might find this whole example of General Chaudhuri yet another confirmation of their faith that the Americans are on the side of order, discipline and efficiency. Indian upper class men have, after all, always believed in depending on others for carrying out the most essential tasks at home.

## New Patrons

The servility of our upper classes finds a new outlet when a new patron is found. Now that the Soviet Union is ruled by bureaucrats and managers who so much resemble Indian administrators in their sense of self-importance and feel for red-tape, our politicians and bureaucrats find it easy to genuflect towards Moscow. Moscow makes it particularly easy for our leaders to feel properly grateful, because it is studiously 'neutral' in its dealings with New Delhi, and does not insist that the Indian leaders do anything at all to prove that they are socialists in deeds as well as in words. Moscow's propaganda machine also does not intrude on educational institutions in India: the USIS is not so inhibited and sends itinerant purveyors of music, political science, history, economics or what-have-you to various Indian schools, colleges and universities. Also, how can Moscow ever match the glorious popularity of such ambassadors of American culture as *Reader's Digest*, *Time*, *Life* or *Playboy*? Altogether Indian leaders have reason to feel happy about their Muscovite patrons: they have only to smirk at official gatherings, and fend off all dangerous thoughts emanating from that quarter behind a screen of neutrality.

There is probably a law of compensation in inegalitarian attitudes: if our upper class characters bow and scrape before white foreigners, they are arrogant towards non-white aliens, and are extremely haughty towards their less-favoured compatriots. In our careful and poisonous constructs of 'Greater India' in Indo-China and Indonesia, our historians and publicists find food for their cultural chauvinism. Brahmanism and Buddhism both supply material for feeling superior to non-white foreigners, and to lower caste, or poorer Indians. It is quite amusing to watch the dual personality at work among many Indians abroad: the same man who would swear (often without reading the great work) that Kautilya's *Arthashastra* had no match either in European antiquity or in the European Middle Ages, would be spe-

cially sedulous in his efforts to curry favour with his American or English patrons.

Retreat into an indigenous variety of elitism is no cure for this servile-arrogant schizophrenia. If slavish imitation of Anglo-American life-styles or cultural activities will keep us in eternal helotry, trying to cultivate our own brand of Ayurveda, or our own brand of literary criticism in isolation from the masses or in isolation from the rest of the world (thank God, there are even other Englishmen and Americans than Winston Churchill, John Steinbeck or Walt Rostow) will merely deliver us into arid pedantry and make us incapable of facing life, which comprises the main business of living after all. Furthermore, the attempt to preserve old 'native' cultures in 'native' reservations against contamination by modernity—particularly of the subversive variety—is an old imperialist game, of which there are many modern and familiar variations.

Meanwhile our upper classes will continue to 'govern' with the aid of thirty-three crores of gods in heaven, and their priests and astrologers to interpret the oracles, and with Big Brothers guarding the international frontiers and safeguarding the freedom of private enterprise at home. A little obeisance now and then, a small gesture of mortification, and occasional harassment in the patron countries as coloured non-persons are not too high a price to pay for the 'security' at home and abroad. The upper classes do not know that they are now worshipping zombies in the form of national culture-myths they have built. Perhaps the young people have sensed rightly that these zombies are now being given a decent cremation and a truly national culture is brought forth from the ashes. But this will not happen until the real masters of the earth—the people who work with their hands and minds and cannot just order other people about—stand up and challenge the servile guardians of a moribund culture.

## Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

THE West Bengal Governor, Mr S. S. Dhavan, is nobody's fool, even if he is in the habit of talking of things which governors in our country usually do not talk about. Of late, of course, he has been somewhat reserved and not talking so much. But if anyone thought he had been cowed down into passivity, he must be mistaken. Behind the scenes, he has been very much active indeed. Having created an image of sorts, he is getting down to brass tacks. The object as ever is to curb 'extremists' of all sorts. Incidentally, they appear to be a more numerous breed than anyone ever supposed them to be. Counting the score for one day alone, it came to over 50. But like the blood of the mythical dragon, wherever one drop falls, another springs up.

Deprived of the Preventive Detention Act, Mr Dhavan has dug up certain nice provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code which, when implemented, are, if anything, better still. Under these the police will be the virtual lords who will rule over the State. Defy Section 144 or any of their orders, and you can be picked and put behind bars without hope of being bailed out, as at present.

Since even petty cases drag on for months normally, and it is in the hands of the police to make the process last as long as they wish, the effect will be the same as of having the Preventive Detention Act. Actually, it is better since there will be the excuse of having people arrested on specific charges. All that the police will need to put anyone they dislike in jail for months is to put up a charge that he has violated Section 144 or some other of their orders.

The other provision which the Governor is reportedly going to invoke will be another godsend. This aims at making certain acts of intimidation cognizable. Since they would be also non-bailable, the power of the

police would be just to their liking. They need not wait for any complaints to be made. They need only to pick and choose. They can take cognizance of any intimidation they like and put the victim of their choice to rot in police or jail custody for practically as long they like by dragging on the case against him.

A curious provision of Section 506 of the IPC which deals with such things sets me thinking. Anyone who imputes unchastity to a woman, it appears, is liable under this section to be jailed up to seven years. A serious price to pay by any standards. But if this is to be the fate of anyone who doubts the chastity of a single woman, what about those who made open remarks about thousands of women? Cannot those who spoke of mass raping at Rabindra Sarobar be brought to book?

The dissolution of the West Bengal Assembly must have come as a shock to many of its members. In particular it seems to have had a sobering effect on the former Chief Minister, Mr Ajoy Mukherjee. With it go his hopes, however faint, of getting into the gaddi for a third time without the tortuous process of elections. But Mr Mukherjee, never conspicuous for his consistency, has surpassed himself this time. He continues to hold the view that elections cannot be held unless 'law and order improves.' He does not want President's Rule either to continue. If law and order improves, he would however wait till 1972. But if it deteriorates, then he wants elections in 1971. It is obvious that Mr Mukherjee has decided

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to keep all his options open. He wants to be in a position to say, and when the elections come, that this is what he wanted, law and order being a subjective notion.

Boys in the Western countries are said to have one major ambition. They want to be firemen when they grow up. Which shows the glamour attaching to fire-engines and firemen in the minds of children there. Some of them indeed carry it into their adult lives though they grow out of their childish ambitions. No such glamour attaches to the fire services in our country. They remain a vital necessity for society nonetheless and require a little sympathy from those who lay down their destinies.

Apart from their considerable occupational hazards, firemen are frequently attacked by hostile mobs for no fault of their own. They have to go wherever they are wanted, whether welcome or not. When called upon to put out a fire lighted by an infuriated mob, the reception is pretty cold. But it can be and sometimes is rather dangerous if the onlookers feel they have come late.

Taking everything in view, therefore, one would have supposed that the firemen would at least be entitled to conditions which make it possible for them to be physically and mentally alert at all times during their duty hours. Unfortunately this is far from the actual facts. Currently the firemen are demanding shift duty and one and a half day's off every week. These are guaranteed by the Shops and Establishments Act and even small shops with one or two employees observe the rules. However, the Government can afford to ignore all that. The firemen are allowed only two days off in a month in place of one and a half days in a week. As for working hours, they work in two shifts. A day shift of nine hours, and a night shift of 15 hours ending at 11 in the morning. All this is an open invitation to take French leave and doze on duty. If their reactions become a little slowed down after such hours, it is certainly unfair to blame them.

## Lenin Sarani

BY A DRAMA CRITIC

THE Lenin Centenary celebrations over the past few months resulted in an assortment of productions, each rendering widely different versions to justify certain norms that the groups involved formulated for themselves. This unfortunate political self-indulgence is definitely a matter of concern. Even those who were brave enough to stand by the historic lessons of the Bolshevik Revolution failed to translate them into Indian conditions and true theatrical art. The Uttari Group presentation of *Lenin Sarani* staged at Muktagan had a lot better to give—it brought about a daring fusion of content and form, an approach miserably lacking in contemporary productions dealing with political material.

The play, written with considerable understanding and a sympathetic eye by Natabar Nandi, concerned itself with persecution as committed by the powers that are, in the disguises of

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religion, revisionism and naked, brute reaction. Such a theme usually suffers from the recurrent danger of dwindling into didacticism, but a very interesting manipulation of theatrical devices retrieved a subject condemned to slogan shouting till eternity. The redeeming feature came through, owing to a highly imaginative form where the direct reality of struggle as a social experience was staged not through realism in art but via the media of symbols and expressionistic devices. As this critic was later to learn, the playwright happens to be a psycho-analyst treading Pavlovian lines, by profession and it is small wonder that he utilised well the tricks of his trade. For a play with a political message to impart, one is afraid, the production was far too verbose and though undoubtedly not exactly diffuse as a play, the happenings (or rather the action on the stage) were in comparison fewer than one would expect. The incidents were minor in themselves, but they added up to a final image where Lenin stands out to be the unquestionable leader of the oppressed classes and Lenin Sarani signifies freedom and cold, impersonal death to the oppressors. The ending, a bit contrived, but necessary perhaps, somehow did not click with the otherwise sophisticated approach to the play in general.

Nirmal Ghosh, whose contribution as director to the making of the play is to be envied by others in a similar task, should have attempted better grooming of the cast. But for Lalmanik Dutt's mature acting one has hardly much to say about the others.

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## "Juvenile Delight"

G. DASGUPTA

LAST Sunday a special screening of two films produced by the Children's Film Society was arranged by the Calcutta Film Society. *Heerer Prajapati* directed by Shanti Prasad Chowdhury has previously been reviewed by our critic. The other one was Mrinal Sen's *Ichhapuran*. Based on a Tagore short story the film differs from it in that it absorbs the poet's message together with an attitude more mature and more critical. The story had relegated the fight of the generations to an interesting piece of comic situations, but the film saw more behind this truth which is as stale as it is general. Sushil, the truant boy, finds that for values that have come down through the ages, he is destined to remain under his father's subjugation. The power structure is so manipulated that the elders do not know how to view the younger generation. Sushil must not rest content and his every act operates on the level of protest and defiance of modern concepts of morality. The film opens on a vibrant note with father Subal chasing his son who constantly eludes him, accompanied by even more vibrantly alive rhythmic beats of music, Sen, an accomplished director, justifies the stand he is to take at the start. The helpless cry of Subal after he loses his slippers in the stream below allows the director a privileged position which he of course does not fail to explore as the theme unfolds. The children, whether at school or at a game of "kabadi" (a bewitching spell of Mahajan sorcery), mock the school-teacher and the durwan—both symbols of authority. Routine activities in the family, together with the rustic atmosphere that pervades the entire length of the film, have been drawn out with a care for detail that shows the versatility of the director.

On being finally pushed into a tight corner by Subal, the son begs the Goddess of Wish-Fulfilment to

grant him his desire of being transformed in the image of his father while the old man, tired of being a watchdog, craves for youth. Their desires are fulfilled and this leads to absurd situations, at times hilariously funny and at others a bit too trite. But with this, the normal order of things has begun to change and the severe break with traditions and social behaviour patterns is tantamount to revolt. The near scandalous affair shocks the village elders and normality at any cost must be restored. Disorder must not be given free rein and a witch-doctor (ojha) is called in to put things right. And the director, who has for quite some time now been imbibing "protest and anti-establishment feelings" against all that today's consumer-based society stands for, has not hesitated to ridicule the doctor and the grouped-together village elders. Later reconciling themselves to the fact that such antics are getting on their nerves the father and the son decide to change over to their past with a realisation that today's world must carry on as it is—a child's torturous hell, a father's necessary and inconceivable domination—so long as fossilised values and concepts of morality remain to justify such relationships.

The film is full of visual delight. Senuously beautiful images clothed in rustic garb, with an enchanting Surajit Nandy and a boisterous Sekhar Chatterjee, aided by a perfect group of artistes, lend to this film a spirit that envelops the imagination of the young and the rational sensibility of the old. Technically done with an eye for perfection, a certain disparity at times in the sound track married to the visuals was apparent; and in view of Mrinal Sen's sophisticated approach to film-making, slick eye-catching gimmicks, I feel, should be given up for once. But in all a stimulating film made not unequivocally for children but for those who

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could be led on to a greater realisation and understanding of the "naughty little brats." Unlike *Bhuvan Shome* thematically this does not happen to be a challenging film. Its defiance is toned down, camouflaged subtly in children's pranks, but it does not fail to question, and the questions asked ring harsh but true. It does not condemn but calls to trial the woe-begone father, a silent frame, a distant questioning gaze—the final image of the film.

## Ragas Megha And Mallar And Tagore Songs

BY A MUSIC CRITIC

AT a recent musical soiree under the auspices of Uttarbharati, Hirendar Chakraborty traced the genesis of the ragas Megha and Mallar with special reference to Kalidasa's *Meghadutam* of the imperial Gupta age. Unfortunately, neither raga occurs in Matanga's *Brihaddeshi* of the 7th century a.d. Entering the raga pantheon of Indian classical music for the first time in the 11th and 9th centuries respectively, both the ragas were reshaped by the genius of Mia Tansen. The seni or Delhi school of musical thought reached the Tagore House of Jorasanko via Vishnupur towards the beginning of the 19th century.

Mr Chakraborty traced the development of the Mallar ragas in five distinct phases of the musical compositions of Tagore for which he chose ragas Goud Mallar, Megha, Nat Mallar and Mia ki Mallar. Of course the soiree began with Aju Morana

Vana Bole in Goud Mallar tin tal, a favourite song of Tagore, along with its Bengali adaptation in *Kalmrigaya*. The next Brahmasangit phase was exemplified by the composition of Mia Tansen in Megha, jhamp tal, also sung in chorus. The later stage of this phase was exemplified by the Kheyal composition of Sadaranga in Nat Mallar, ektal (Tapati Roy) and its Tagore adaptation—More bare phirale (Indrani Bhattacharya). The Brahmasangit phase culminated in the Gitanjali phase which was exemplified by Abar esche ashadh (Aloka Ghosh).

Tagore's independent composition began in 1919. It was reflected in Gagane gagane (Basudev Bhattacharya). Bohu juger opar hote (Srikanta Roy Chowdhury), a rain-song of 1922 in Kedar-Kamod, kaharwa, was selected to emphasise the fact that Tagore had no fixation with regard to any causal relation between the rains and the Mallar ragas. Sadarang's Bol re papayara in Miaki Mallar, tin tal (Indrani Bhattacharya) was independently adopted in Kotha je udhao holo (Chandidas Mal) where he was almost on the verge of creating a new raga but turned away from the Mia Anga, using the flat sixth and the natural notes instead of the prescribed ones. The ascent and the descent do not indicate such a clear scale as to facilitate the movement of a specific raga.

The fifth and last phase of Tagore's career as composer says good-bye to the raga concept. He is more concerned with expressions of feeling and moods and delineation of beauty through melody rather than classical practices. This is reflected in the songs composed between 1930 and 1940. This phase was exemplified by Mor bhavanare (Bithika Mukherjee), Megha chaye (Madhuri Sarkar) and Amar priyar chaya (Samir Pal). The raga angas lost their prominence and the composer turned to the tala schemes of folk music. Tagore created and nurtured the romantic movement in Indian music.

The singers were ably supported by Abhijit Chakraborty while Prabanesha Bhattacharya played the harmonium.

## Clippings

### Roof-top Firing

A Calcutta Police spokesman told newsmen at Lalbazar... they had come across 'guerilla tactics of war' when they raided two extremist hideouts at Muchipara in Central Calcutta and Jorabagan in North Calcutta (On Saturday). In both places, the police party was severely attacked with bombs and brickbats by the Naxalites, who hid themselves inside lanes and by-lanes. A large number of policemen was injured. In the Muchipara incident, the Detective Department conducted a raid on a house at Ramakanta Mistri Lane on secret information, when a group of Naxalites showered crackers and molotov cocktails from a hideout. The police then went to the top of a nearby house from where they fired about 13 rounds almost indiscriminately. Some people, including a few innocent passersby were hit... During the encounter, shops and establishments were closed down. Panic-stricken people were seen running for shelter. Vehicular movements were also stopped for some time. (*Hindustan Standard*).

### Poster Campaign

The Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting plans to go into action... in West Bengal to create opinion against violence and acquaint the people with the progress of development work under President's Rule. In this campaigning, the Ministry proposes to utilise the services of an advertising agency... The plan is initially to cover Calcutta with multi-colour posters with portraits of the great sons of Bengal and quotations from them against violence and hatred. Several specimens of these have been produced. The posters will be printed in thousands of copies. Road-side kiosks in different parts of the city will be rented to display them. A number of hoardings may be put up. Boundary walls or walls of houses abutting on main roads will be plastered with

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them. In some areas slogans may be painted on walls. (*Hindusthan Standard*).

### Steeled Cops

As a safeguard against bomb attacks, policemen in Calcutta will shortly be provided with steel armour. A senior police official said... that the armour had already been tried and found not unwieldy. Each armour, he said, weighed roughly 8 lb and would protect the body from the chest to the abdomen (*The Statesman*)

### Saigon Economy

It is fantastic to see what \$30,000 million (Rs 22,500 crores) a year buys for the United States in South Vietnam. A million of those dollars go bang in just one mission by B52s. They have been flying 2,500 missions a year in South Vietnam.

But American dollars are South Vietnam's lifeblood in ways that go beyond the high cost of waging war with 413,900 Americans and more than a million Vietnamese under arms.

South Vietnam's foreign trade? It runs a deficit of more than \$700 million yearly. The U.S. picks up the tab—all of it.

National employment? There are 150,000 Vietnamese and 20,000 third-country nationals—mostly South Koreans and Filipinos—on American payrolls, together with their dependents, about 750,000 civilians. The cost is more than \$400 million a year, right out of the U.S. Treasury.

Every give-away programme of the Saigon Government is financed by the U.S... With more imported wares than before, the South Vietnamese who can afford it have gone on a buying spree. Japanese television sets and motor-cycles have nearly cornered the market.

...There is no precise way to compare the cost of the U.S. investment in South Vietnam with what the Soviet Union and China have spent to help North Vietnam.

An executive in the U.S. defence industry has estimated that the cost ratio is probably about 100 to 1 for arms alone.

What is \$50,000 million of U.S. armaments thrown into the war against \$500 million from Russian and Chinese stockpiles? (*The Economic Times*).

\* \* \*

The Saigon Government has been in the happy position so far of being able to fight the war at the Americans' expense. However, with the Vietnamisation programme and drastic reductions in US forces, South Vietnam now faces a crisis. Over the last three years, the annual rate of inflation has been kept below 30%... But this year will see a virtual doubling of the inflationary spiral, imposing fresh sacrifices on a civilian population which had already paid a monstrous price in human casualties and the destruction of economic facilities thanks to the indiscriminate way the US and Saigon have turned the whole country into a battle ground. (*Far Eastern Economic Review*).

### "The Protectors"

Communist forces in Cambodia today could well be overrunning the capital but instead, in true ideological fashion they seem to be preparing for a long-term but more thorough takeover. The plan now appears to be to organise a political infrastructure from the bottom up... Many Khmer peasants hardly need to be politicised to be anti-imperialist and anti-Nol. As long as the Americans keep bombing, as long as the South Vietnamese plunder, as long as the Phnom Penh government ignores them, in the minds of many peasants it may be the North Vietnamese Khmer cadre who look like the good guys and the anti-communist forces the bad.

... "If the Nol government says it wants to protect the Khmer people why did it destroy this town?" said a Vietcong slogan daubed on the wall of the hospital at Saang shortly after Khmer troops retook the town after an orgy of shooting at an enemy who had long since left. For those Khmers returning to their charred and looted homes such rhymes may have reason. (An American correspondent

in *The Far Eastern Economic Review*).

### On Nixon

I've been with Nixon socially. I've travelled with him in his private plane. I've seen him under many conditions. The shallowness of the man overwhelms me. The fact that he is President frightens me. (Chet Huntley, American journalist, quoted in *The Times*).

### Voice of Israeli Communists

The Bureau of the CP (Israel) Central Committee expresses its deep concern, which is the concern of the entire people, in the wake of the reports on the participation of Soviet pilots in the flying activities of the Egyptian armed forces. The Bureau holds that this operational involvement of Soviet pilots with possibly further implications yet unknown, is apt to bring about the renewal of the war between the Arab countries and Israel, and even to endanger world peace. The CPI Central Committee Bureau protests against this intensified, dangerous involvement of the Soviet Union, that contradicts overtly the cease-fire according to the Security Council resolution of June 1967 and its declared stand in favour of a political settlement of the Arab-Israel conflict. (*Kol Ha' Am*)

### Televisionaries

The Punjab Government has asked the Centre to set up television stations in Amritsar and Jullundur to meet the challenge of Pakistani TV programmes which have become popular in these towns.

...Industrialists in the Punjab and Haryana region have shown interest in setting up factories for the manufacture of TV sets. The Haryana Government has already recommended to the Centre the application of a private firm to make the sets with foreign collaboration at Faridabad.

...The demand for TV is particularly keen in Punjab for many reasons. The Punjabis have more money than the people of any other State. They are also a bit more fond of glamour and pomp as is evident from



the rapid growth of cinema houses in the villages and towns and in the furnishings and fittings of middle class homes. (*The Times of India*)

### Credit Mobilisation

We took an illiterate man to a local bank to deposit his savings. To our surprise the branch manager refused to open an account in his name because the depositor could not sign his name. Banking rules must be amended before Mr Chavan can mobilize deposits in the rural areas; the 1961 census puts the number of illiterate people at 76% of the total population. (*Letters, The Statesman*)

### Changing Colour

Mr George Tomkin, aged 31, whose skin changed colour because of a kidney disease, was told at the weekend that the local council (Poole, U.K.) would buy his house and rent it back to him. He will pay £4 a week rent, half the amount of the mortgage he cannot afford because his dark skin has affected his work prospects.

Mr Tomkin's wife was told by a woman coloured... how to live with the insults and scorn that may come the way of a coloured person.

The woman said in a telephone call: "A sense of humour is one of the most important things." She offered to introduce Mrs Tomkin to white women who had married coloured men. (*The Times*)

## Letters

### Gandhi

Apropos Sundarlal's letter (July 18) on Gandhi, Romain Rolland, in his historic message to the prisoners of the Meerut Conspiracy Case on February 15, 1933, said: "... But when this revolution started taking the shape of a huge mass upsurge in Gandhiji's Satyagraha movement, repression also surpassed all usual patterns. This great wave of mass upheaval has been limited within non-violent methods by a great genius.

As this reformist bourgeois class wants to maintain the status quo through compromise and surrender, this well-organised movement has not yet gone against their interests. The aim of this liberal movement is to bring about a conciliation of Indian interests with British interests." (English translation mine).

Stalin's comment on Gandhi and his activities is more revealing. In his political report to the Central Committee to the 16th Congress of the CPSU(B) on June, 27, 1930, he said: "As regards India, Indo-China, Indonesia, Africa etc., the growth of revolutionary movement in those countries, which at times assumes the form of a national war of liberation, leaves no room for doubt. Messieurs the bourgeoisie count on flooding those countries with blood and on relying on police bayonets calling people like Gandhi to their assistance. There can be no doubt that police bayonets make a poor prop. Tsarism in its day also tried to rely on police bayonets but everybody knows what kind of prop they turned out to be. As regards assistants of Gandhi-type, Tsarism had a whole herd of them in the shape of liberal compromisers of every kind, but nothing came of this except discomfiture." (Stalin—Complete Works, Moscow, 1955, Vol-12, Page-259)

We have seen enough of betrayal, surrender and compromise—so far and no further. This decade is the decade of liberation, of emancipation from the clutches of national and international exploiters. We intellectuals also have a definite role to play.

SISIR K. MAJUMDAR (DR)  
Ashokenagar

The trouble with people like Sundarlal (see Letters, July 18) is that they try to reconcile the irreconcilable. That is why Sundarlal admires Mao as the "greatest revolutionary of the age" while remaining a true Gandhite, without any trace of uneasiness.

Gandhi stood for Sarvodaya, the "udaya" of all! That is, he worked for the "udaya" of rich and poor at

the same time. Which means class reconciliation, and not confrontation. And the weapon he used for this was non-violence.

Mao stands for Communism, which means the "udaya" of the poor only. Mao worked only for the poor and not for both rich and poor and the weapon he used was violence.

Sundarlal, being innocent of class contradictions, may blame Pant to save Nehru or blame Birla to save Gandhi, but the end result of whatever Nehru or Gandhi had done or what Indira Gandhi is doing is the fattening of Birlas and Tatas.

If by revolution Sundarlal means the emancipation of the starving millions, then Mao certainly is the revolutionary of this age and for all ages to come, just as Gandhi was certainly a counter-revolutionary of the first rank. To understand this requires a bit of "daring to think and daring to act" and getting oneself rid of all feudalistic attachment to individuals, even if the individual concerned is called a mahatma.

M. N. D. NAIR  
Trivandrum

Gandhi felt sorry if an ant was crushed under his feet, but not for the hanging of Bhagat Singh and his friends. Tagore used his influence for the release of girl students in the Chittagong terrorist movement but not Gandhi. Once when Gandhi advised Tagore to run the charkha at least one hour every day, he replied that he would do so, for several hours, if anything could be achieved by the outmoded 'charkha'.

We are now witnessing the results of his reforms for the uplift of Harijans without trying to change their economic and social condition. Lots of Harijans were burnt alive during his centenary celebrations. His doctrine of peace and non-violence is a tool in the hands of the ruling classes. How can Gandhi be treated as a friend and ally of the poor? One and the same person cannot be the leader of both the exploited and the exploiting classes. What one can assess from Gandhi's freedom

struggle is that he paved the way for the transfer of power from the British imperialists to the national bourgeoisie.

Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh  
P. A.

## No Ambiguity

If Mr Partha Sarathi Roy (see letter, July 11) takes a closer look at the Naxalites' case, he will not find any contradiction in the CPM leaders' statements about them. The Naxalites are a heterogeneous combination. Naxalite leaders and cadres who organise the masses in the countryside for armed resistance against the feudal exploiters, should be viewed from a different attitude. The Naxalites who operate in the cities and indulge in individual terroristic activities, not even sparing hospitals, must not be equated with the leaders who call upon people to take up arms to put an end to the age-long exploitation and who have dedicated themselves to the cause of the people, whether their tactics and strategy are wrong or not. In the cities and their suburbs Naxalite activities have struck little fear in the hearts of the capitalists; instead, these have led to a far bitter enmity between the CPM and themselves. The CPM has protested against the unleashing of police terror against the struggling peasants, but the Naxalite elements who make CPM leaders and cadres their target of attack are working to the satisfaction of the reactionaries. There is hardly any ambiguity in the words of the CPM leaders. They have correctly distinguished between erring political workers and anti-social elements.

PRABIR KR. MUKHERJEE  
Belgharia

## Mao On The CPSU

Apropos the letter of 'A Reader' (July 11, 1970), I endeavour to answer the question why the CPC under the leadership of Chairman Mao, refrained from public criticism of the CPSU during the period 1956-57.

Soviet revisionism, starting prominently from the notorious 20th Congress of the CPSU, posed a serious question to the Chinese Communists: Should they follow the path taken by the leaders of the CPSU? In that case, the leadership of the Soviet Party would be overjoyed, but the CPC may become another party committed to revisionism. The Chinese Communists also thought about the question: will they keep mum about the mistakes of the Soviet Party leadership? But they understood that these mistakes were not accidental, or personal and petty-mistakes. Many of the mistakes involving the Marxist-Leninist principle itself which endangered the entire socialist camp and the international communist movement. How could they remain silent in the face of such grave danger?

The Chinese Communists also considered that if they criticized the mistakes of the Soviet leadership, then in retaliation certainly the Soviet leaders would hit back and may create a serious rupture in the socialist consolidation of China.

But the most important cause for which the CPC refrained from making public criticism of the CPSU was that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was made by Lenin and it commanded great respect among the peoples of the world. Therefore for a long time, the CPC while criticizing the Soviet Party, undertook great caution and restraint. They also tried to maintain the polemics within inner-party discussion and to come to a general agreement through internal consultation barring open criticism.

The subsequent history is known to all. In spite of all comradely criticism and friendly advice of the CPC to the leaders of the CPSU, the revisionist leaders of the CPSU publicly attacked the CPC, stopped all economic help for the consolidation of Socialist China and created a tremendous pressure both politically and militarily. Naturally, the Chi-

nese Communists had no alternative but to take to open criticism and to make public replies to the attacks of the revisionist leaders of the CPSU.

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