

frontier

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REFORM OF PRINCES

THE Constitution Amendment Bill to abolish the privy purses and privileges of the princes, stalled by the Rajya Sabha, was to come into force on October 15; there was therefore, enough time for the Government to call a special session of Parliament to get it through. But its provisions are to be enforced through an executive fiat. As the Lok Sabha had already passed the Bill with the requisite two-thirds majority, the sticklers for the so-called democratic procedure may not object. Philistines will, however, ask why then the matter had been delayed so long. The undivided Congress had recommended abolition three years ago, but the action was withheld on the pretext that propriety called for a constitutional amendment. Having done that the Government could as well wait for the farcical formality to run its full course, for the Rajya Sabha can be obstructive only to an extent and never the arbiter. Heavens would not have fallen if the princes continued to be Their Excellencies for some weeks more and their families and animals got free medical care. Even in the twenty-first year of the Republic, many Indians take pride in sporting titles conferred by the British! There are some who take umbrage if the titles are left out in deference to the Constitution which is said to be inviolate. They want to take the titles to their graves. For all one knows, the honorific may stick to the princes even after derecognition. Whether privy purses are subject to the rules that govern wages of the salariat is not known. In the case of the latter, a few days more or less make a difference. Such petty rules may not apply to Their Excellencies; and, in any case, the country could pay them a few weeks more.

The reason for the hurry is not the uncontrollable urge of the Prime Minister and her party for socialism, but the impending mid-term poll in Kerala. The measure had to be enforced immediately so that it may earn the Congress (R) some additional votes in Kerala. If the gambit in Kerala pays, there will be some more before the general election of 1972. It would have been squeamish to stress the motivation, petty though it is, if the reform was thorough. But this cannot be said of the Government's proposal. "Abolition" is a misnomer, for what the Government is doing is to buy off the privy purses. Expropriation has

no place in the brand of socialism the Prime Minister practises and the Constitution guarantees. The quantum of compensation has not been decided yet, obviously because the princes do not regard the amount proposed as reasonable. A bargain will no doubt be struck eventually, and the princes will, with an appropriate show of dissent, exchange their rights and privileges for fabulous amounts. There may also be under-the-counter deals with the ringleaders. Some of them may turn overnight into that special type of patriots who alone can adorn gubernatorial gaddies; some others may be found suitable for ambassadorial junkets or ministerial mucking. Even without these the Government will be more than generous to the princes. The amount of Rs. 4.80 crores likely to be saved from the so-called abolition is a dwindling quantity; the first-generation entitlements added up to much more while future generations would have got much less. Any compensation on the present rates will be tilted in favour of the princes. They will not only get princely prices for covenants with diminishing returns but be rid of the gnawing fear of expropriation by a subsequent government.

More cannot be expected from the present government. The ballyhoo over the Bill is largely simulated. Its critics want to extort more from the Government which had gladly allowed itself to be blackmailed at the time of independence and has perpetuated the blackmail for so many years without demur. Its supporters are trying to laud it skyhigh so that a feeble compromise may pass as a daring reform. The noise is of the market-place. All that the Government proposes is to eliminate the elite of a by-gone regime at a handsome price. The princes are being given a chance to merge in the new elite created by the Congress. The Governor of West Bengal costs at least Rs one lakh a month, and the annual expenditure on him will be the envy of most princes. The President is a much costlier institution. The country can very well do without these sinecures. But they are

said to be an integral part of the system, and a demand for abolition of these costly frills will be turned down as sacrilegious if not treasonous. The Governors are of use to the ruling party, but not the princes who have

outlived the utility they had at the time of transfer of power. They are now being given a chance to renew themselves as props of the regime. The overture has not been lost on some; it may not be on thers also.

Deluge That Didn't Cleanse

The intensity and extent of the damage that a few days' heavy rainfall has caused in the southern parts of West Bengal are slowly but painfully coming to light. Statistics cannot reveal the misery of those whose homes fell, whose cattle are dead, crops ruined, property swept away and family members lost. But even dry figures most hurriedly and cursorily drawn reveal the frightening proportions of the tragedy. Four hundred thousand people have become homeless in Burdwan, 200,000 in Midnapore, 50,000 in Bankura. In 24-Parganas 4.5 lakh people remained partially under water for a week, in Nadia 300,000. In one subdivision of Hooghly, Arambagh, 100 people are feared dead at the preliminary count. The damage in Howrah and Birbhum, apprehended to be as severe, is yet to be reported. The Damodar and the Kasai and their tributaries have wrecked Bankura and Midnapore; and the other five districts have faced a deluge from rivers which in ordinary times looked like dry canals. The release of water by the dam authorities has flooded many areas, in the absence of irrigation canals.

Large tracts of the seven districts that have gone under water may remain waterlogged for the whole of the next fortnight. Seventy-five thousand acres of aman crops in Midnapore are submerged; five lakh hectares in the Sunderbans are still lying under water. The paddy fields of West Bengal, which looked green and fresh as they swirled in the air, promising a bumper harvest and the highest output among all the States, may now be a memory. The cumulative effect of three successive good monsoons has gone down the rivers, with foodgrains worth several crores of rupees already rotting. The green revolution has not been able to bear

a couple of days' torrents. The economy of the State has almost been ruined.

Even Calcutta, home of the Bengali upper ten, was not spared. The clogged drains that would not carry any extra water made 36,000 people leave their homes, not only in slums but also in the fashionable localities. Thirty thousand of them are now in relief camps. Fourteen people died, within the knowledge of record keeping officials, not to count those whose existence was in the best of times hardly known. Two thousand tonnes of foodgrains rotted in godowns flooded by rainwater and are now lying under stagnant pools. The garbage heaped around street corners is now evenly spread over the city. Drainwater has seeped into worn out drinking water mains. Pestilence is said to be round the corner.

It has been a deluge that didn't cleanse. The dirt and squalor that it has left behind wouldn't have pleased Malthus. Hardly two years have passed since north Bengal was visited by a devastating flood; and all the high-sounding assurances by the President's people then are now being echoed with the same vacuity. The same farcical relief measures are being repeated with a sickening bombast and the CRP and the army are being played up as do-gooders. The parties are out to take political advantage out of the wretchedness of people perched on collapsing huts. The invariable appeals to Mr Dhavan and the Centre have been plentiful. The Centre is still unable to wake up for its huge torpor; maybe because its dynamic spirit is away at Lusaka; till she comes back, lyrical outpourings will have to wait. Meanwhile Mr K. L. Das, the Irrigation Minister, will be busy preparing

the papers. His computer is on. With marvellous accuracy he has prepared the case: seven died in the West Bengal floods, 5549 homes have collapsed, Rs. 1,17,90,000 worth of property and Rs. 1,16,90,000 worth of foodgrains damaged. Mr B. B. Ghosh here, the apostle of parliamentary accountability, is making sure that nobody who is not affected by the floods gets the government doles; marooned people must wade through dirty water, crawl past carcasses and live snakes, to register themselves with the official in charge of government relief. The army officers are instructing their guards to wear red dress so that they can be discernible from helicopters. Each in his own

way is playing his role. It is a question of hours when the revolutionary petty bourgeois leaders will start to calculate the effect of the floods on the elections though the rank and file of many parties have braved the weather and the dirty water to help people. Taken all in all, however, the same old story except the fact that the rains have laid bare most pointedly the insecurity of lives, urban as well as rural, in West Bengal where Nature with one or two hasty tricks can take the wind out of the civilised man. And this is no singular feature of West Bengal; eleven States of modern India have lain prostrate before the rain god this monsoon.

which prodded him to go for peace and give up the demand for evacuation of the territories as a precondition to any settlement.

A section of the Israeli leadership opposed peace talks with parties which were not in a position to implement any settlement. As soon as the cease-fire came into effect, Dr George Habbash of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine made it clear that if any Arab Governments tried to curb guerilla activities, a conflict between them and the commandos would be inevitable. He has inspired the Iraq Oil and Minerals Trade Union to declare that all oil interests and installations in the Arab area would be destroyed if the American peace proposals were carried out. Not only the PFLP but Palestine liberation organisations of any consequence have totally rejected all peaceful solutions to the Middle East crisis. Nasser thought that the majority of the Palestinians would rally round him if he could return them the West Bank and Jerusalem. But the Palestinians know from their experience that what has been lost to force cannot be recovered by diplomacy. They are ready to go to any extent to meet the Zionist challenge. Three planes hijacked—one of which has been blown up and the other two kept in northern Jordan with most of their passengers as hostages—the reported Israeli parachute landing in northern Jordan, the tension between the commandos and the Jordanian forces, all this seems to have opened up unknown chapters in West Asia at the moment of writing. The commandos have again come to the centre of the stage.

Commandos Again

Perhaps the most frustrated man at the UN headquarters today is Dr Gunnar Jarring who thought that with the blessing of the super-powers he would be able to bring 'peace' to the Middle East. With Israel pulling out of the peace talks until she is satisfied that the standstill cease-fire has been restored to its previous form, there is little prospect of the negotiations resuming soon. It should be clear to everybody that the Zionist lobby in America, which is more powerful than the oil lobby, enables Mrs Golda Meir to retain the initiative in foreign policy, at least where the Arabs are involved. A few months before the acceptance of the Rogers proposals, Tel Aviv arranged wide publicity for its charge that under every minaret in Egypt and near the Suez Canal there was a Russian SAM. The lie was so obvious that even the Nixon Administration had qualms to go openly with Israel. Nevertheless, the objective of the Golda Meir Cabinet was fulfilled, it got the arms it wanted. The strategic balance which has been always against the Arabs became more favourable to Israel following the huge supply of sophisticated military hardware. A check up of the Russian arms supply to the UAR will show that they are mostly defensive in nature. Moscow is against a long-drawn war, for that

will bring the commandos to the top. It is lending support to the moderate Arabs only to consolidate its political gains in the region.

Israel has alleged that the UAR is moving missiles into the cease-fire zone. As on the previous occasion, Tel Aviv produced some fuzzy aerial photographs. Even though America's intelligence network in the area is more sophisticated, at first she neither denied nor substantiated the Israeli charge. But the implication was obvious. Since August 7 there has been virtually no gunfire along the Canal, but the Israeli attacks on a Jordanian military position and a Lebanese border village are of a very serious nature. There is no room to doubt the commitment of Nasser to peace negotiations, as he has to dance to the tune called by the Kremlin,

Woman For All Seasons

When MPs of the leftist variety went into raptures over the crest-fallen princes, the workers and government employees in Rajasthan had other things to ponder over. All strikes have been prohibited there by the State Government and the penalties for violations will be severe. While Manipur and Tripura greeted

their coming statehood, action by the underground in Nagaland flared up again in an ambush. Assam was strike-bound over the demand for another oil refinery while Calcutta and most parts of West Bengal underwent a bandh too as a result of torrential rain and floods. It was difficult for this paper to concentrate

on national and international news—the local inconveniences were so overwhelming. In fact the week beginning Monday, August 31 has been beset with difficulties, first with the false expectations of a massive demonstration, then the onslaught of the weather.

The battle raged in New Delhi, judging from All India Radio and the newspapers. Then Mrs Gandhi went to Lusaka, a proud woman. The gentleman who spread the bomb scare over the telephone did also contribute to her image—she wanted the plane to fly on in the face of possible adversity.

There is no need to doubt that her stars are in the ascendant and that as Home Minister she will beat her predecessors hollow—because she has excellent leftist advisers. She can be ruthless in the feminine way—a kind of sly ruthlessness. Her writ has begun to run in the States controlled by the Congress. And since India is one—according to the Congress—the barbarities in Andhra Pradesh or West Bengal or Rajasthan should not be looked at as isolated phenomena. For in a distorted way, she is the activist, and the centre of attention of all political parties which swear by the parliamentary path. It is a kind of love-hate relationship, but political hatred in India is at the moment not very intense, the primary reason being that social origin, of course with great disparities in income, unites most politicians. For instance, the same wavelengths seem to operate for Mr Dhavan and some of his political adversaries, sometimes leading to confusion. The confusion will continue. There is something inert here which even the most extreme activists will find difficult to move. When a faint stir is discernible, some kind of natural calamity will intervene, raising the already unbearable degree of poverty, but this poverty does not break out in rebellion. Appeals for charity will rend the air. Besides, the holy season is approaching. We shall be in a forgiving mood. Politics will be suspended. And the benign other face of Mrs Gandhi will be there to charm her supporters and admirers.

View from Delhi

By Executive Order

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

WHAT suffered most over the weekend was credibility of some of the political parties, including Mrs Indira Gandhi's, whichever side of the princes they were. The credibility of Mrs Gandhi's government is in serious doubt, as never before, amidst subtle threats of a snap election and the brave talk of going to the nation on the princes issue. To derecognise the anachronistic lot of princes through an executive order after the bill had taken a beating in the Rajya Sabha is mala fide in the least. The Law Minister, the late Mr P. Govinda Menon, had suggested abolition of the privy purses and privileges by an executive order but the leadership, motivated by political considerations, thought of a constitutional amendment. When the bill fell through once again the idea of an executive order was revived. If the Government knew executive action would suffice, the cumbersome process of a Constitution Amendment Bill when the ruling party did not have even a simple majority in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha was unnecessary. Why did Mrs Gandhi go for the adventure on the Constitution Amendment Bill so late in the monsoon session without even the minimum political preparation? If she was trying to put the onus for passing the bill on the Congress-O it was too big a price to pay because more than the Congress-O's, the credibility of her own party has suffered.

The demand for abolition of privy purses and privileges was a Y. B. Chavan manoeuvre early in 1967 at the AICC. One of his favourite Young Turks moved the amendment to the 10-point programme and it was passed by a snap vote. Mrs Gandhi was the unhappiest leader then and the Old Guard thought it was a Young Turk coup against them. Last week, Mrs Gandhi claimed that the question had been raised as early as 1953

before either Mr Chavan or she became a member of the Congress Working Committee. She was trying to deprive Mr Chavan of any credit for the privy purses abolition idea. Well, Mrs Gandhi could not carry out the programme when the Congress party was united but wanted to attempt it when the party had split and she had lost her House majority!

When the bill was lost on Saturday, Mrs Gandhi, about to embark for the Lusaka summit, was anxious that the defeat should not get the headline treatment in the morrow's papers. At a hurried Cabinet huddle it was decided around midnight that the princes should be derecognised, rendering the Constitution Amendment Bill redundant. The decision might retrieve part of the lost credibility but in the eyes of the people, a defeat is a defeat, be it by a third of a vote or a hundred votes. Serious doubts have been cast on the voting figures in the Lok Sabha and every close vote in Parliament in the future is certain to invite charges of irregularities and discrepancies.

The frenzied Congress-R whipping up for the Lok Sabha vote needs recording. On Monday, when the Bill was to be taken up in the Lok Sabha, Mr K. K. Raghuramiah, the Chief Whip of the ruling party, held out threats of a mid-term poll if the Government lost by any chance. When the story was on the UNI ticker, Mr Raghuramiah seemed to have got cold feet and a hurried disclaimer was issued. The threat was primarily meant to be a pressure tactic to force wavering partymen and the large number of independents into line. The formal disclaimer (the boing he got in the House when he contradicted the news agency report in the House the next day speaks for his credibility) notwithstanding, the objective had been achieved. Any way, it was a tre-

mendous achievement for Mr Raghuramiah, mobilising in addition to his own party vote, the vote of the DMK, the CPI and even the CPI(M). With all this, the bill scraped through, which was some victory for Mr Raghuramiah. The princes' lobby went wrong in its calculations about the defections from the ruling party and the bloc vote they were so sure of from the BKD. An offshoot of the bill fiasco now is the possibility of the Congress-R withdrawing support to Mr Charan Singh who in any case seems to have made arrangements to continue on the support of the Congress-O and the Jana Sangh.

Airlines' Go-Slow

The Indian Airlines go-slow proved the Government's undoing in the Rajya Sabha. With a Chairman like Mr Mohan Kumaramangalam, the dispute need not have dragged on so long, at least when the MPs were stranded on their way to vote for the abolition of the privy purses and privileges of princes. The Government side wanted to stretch the debate until after all the planes had arrived and the expected MPs had hit town. The Calcutta plane arrived but Mr A. P. Chatterji and Mr D. L. Sen Gupta were not in it. The debate could not be stretched any further and at some point, the vote had to be taken.

The CPI's bully boys are already alleging sabotage of the bill by the CPI(M) but the charge seems baseless. But one could not help noticing a certain amount of hypocrisy in the CPI(M)'s stance. Mr P. Ramamurti said his party was aware of all the machinations and the political motivations behind Mrs Gandhi's decision to bring forward this bill. He said if the Government was serious it could have achieved the objective through a mere executive order. Notwithstanding all this, his party would support the Bill. It appeared that the CPI(M)'s support lacked conviction and was governed more by expediency because even a neutral position during the vote would

have been utilised by the Congress-R and the CPI in Kerala. No Kerala member of the CPI(M) wanted to take the risk of absenting himself on September 1 and 2 and they rushed from the election campaign back home to vote on the bill. One can even condone the half-hearted support to the bill the motives of which were suspect in the party's eyes. But Mr Ramamurti went on to denounce the Constitution and said this party wanted it thrown out lock, stock and barrel and vaguely talked about the people going into action. It was some dialectical expertise to talk under the cover of parliamentary immunity about the need to throw the Constitution out. But participation in the parliamentary system hardly squares up with the philosophy behind the need to throw the Constitution out. In any case, neither he nor his party has had the courage to make such a forthright statement outside Parliament. Whenever anybody made a statement, there were elaborate explanations to contradict what the Press reported.

The party's misadventure in West Bengal on the eve of the Kerala elections might not really affect the outcome of the September 17 poll. But there are reports of a marginal accretion of strength for the mini-front-Congress-R alliance. The plan for a "third" front (of the Congress-R, Kerala Congress and Congress-O) has collapsed and Mr M. N. Govindan Nair has been ruefully complaining about the CPI(M)'s gang up with the Syndicate and the Jana Sangh. The CPI(M) has forced a new kind of "polarisation" in the State: the Jana Sangh has been taken under the wings to counter the Muslim League. For instance, in Mr Namboodiripad's constituency, the Jana Sangh pulled out its candidate because the CPI(M)'s main rival happened to be a CPI man getting the Muslim League support. By all accounts, the CPI(M)-led front will do well at the polls and Mrs Gandhi's party and the CPI would have contributed to the liquidation of each other.

September 6, 1970

The Thames TV Affair

BY AN INSIDER

WHY did it all happen? How did it come about that the New Delhi and West Bengal governments decided that a visiting television team—British at that—could not report at will on Indian politics? What was the motive in abrogating the traditional freedom of reporting, in harrying journalists, in searching rooms without a warrant, threatening arrests, and, finally, in imposing conditions of work which any self-respecting correspondent accustomed to a democratic society was bound to refuse? The experience of the London Thames television team, following hard on the expulsion of the BBC from India, suggests either a new intensity of pique or a genuine and determined campaign for limiting freedom. For the Thames crew their wasted weeks in Delhi have been an expensive and disenchanting affair: for India it may be a more serious matter.

Yet, curiously, the whole drama had a very quiet opening. In the normal pattern of work of the Thames crew—they work for the leading British current affairs programme 'This Week', watched by 12 million people every Thursday evening—a researcher arrived three weeks ahead of his colleagues. He moved around Calcutta talking to political leaders of all persuasions, discovering what could be filmed to illuminate the problems of West Bengal, particularly the problems of land ownership and the socio-economic-political consequences of ownership, and lack of it. He wrote a formal letter to the Home Secretary informing him of the team's arrival in the middle of August. Like everyone else he was unaware that India had regulations of the kind that obtain in countries where free reporting is an alien, liberal concept. He met a lot of people, seemed to get on well with them: there looked to be no difficulties ahead. Throughout August his colleagues arrived. From Cambodia, where they had been making a film about the war, came the director

Christopher Goddard, the cameraman Ian MacFarlane, sound recordist Stanley Clarke. A few days later—on the 15th August, the reporter John Morgan arrived from the Middle East. On the next day, the rest of the crew, making 8 in all. Meanwhile in London the Producer of the programme had visited the Indian High Commission and a letter had been sent to New Delhi introducing the team to the government in the expectation all would be well. As yet, no storm clouds, no whisper of difficulties.

Even when it took a few days to clear equipment and film and sound stock through customs there was no sense of alarm since that can happen in the best regulated of systems. Looking back on the fiasco, one of the curiosities of the early days was that members of the crew would occasionally ask in a casual kind of way if permission was necessary in order to film and were told, privately, not to bother. Indeed one very prominent member of the Calcutta hierarchy rather wittily told Morgan—and prophetically—that it would be wiser not to ask for permission since it would only give some bureaucrat a chance to refuse it. British politeness, ironically, was to become the British undoing because Peter Ibbotson's earlier letter became interpreted as precisely a formal application.

Preparing the ground for their work the crew discovered that by a happy chance the Prime Minister, Mrs Gandhi, was visiting West Bengal on August 22. So Ibbotson went to Delhi with a letter for Mrs Gandhi, asking if she would grant an interview. He was favourably received, passes were granted by the West Bengal Government. Mrs Gandhi's visit to the refugee villages was filmed in the mud, rain and general confusion and afterwards at Dum Dum Airport Morgan interviewed the Prime Minister on the subjects of land ownership, on law and order, and her view of the prospects of the ultimate success of democracy in West Bengal. Where were the clouds in the sky? The plans for the film were laid. Peasants had been talked to who were

willing to be interviewed; landlords were agreeable: the forces of law and order were cooperative. It was on the 25th that the atmosphere changed. Two things happened, one relatively unimportant, one vital, looking at the scene in retrospect. John Morgan had to return for a few days to London on a private matter, but that did not interrupt filming. But that same day a letter was received from the Home Secretary saying that filming was not 'now' possible in West Bengal. This was a reply to the Ibbotson letter of *two weeks* earlier.

The team meanwhile had been filming in the countryside, some sequences scenic, others of a demonstration by villagers against the Government. That film was in the team's possession: the film of the Prime Minister had already been sent back to London through customs in the normal way. (The Government was later to claim, in passing, that this film had been transported to London illegally. It must be one of the curiosities of the history of journalism for a government to claim that an interview granted with permission by its own Prime Minister and formally and openly shipped through that country's customs, bearing the official stamp, is illegal).

Other Developments

But during these few days, of course, there had been other developments and depending on the importance attached to them, both could have been at the root of the increasingly hostile ministerial response. The first was the expulsion of the BBC from India as a result of the Louis Malle films. This could be seen as an expression of unfriendliness towards Britain, partly perhaps justified. And wasn't this television crew filming in West Bengal British, even if they didn't belong to the BBC but the Independent network? So was the motive—a determination that no more were foreigners going to be free to roam India perhaps shooting film which gave the country a bad name abroad: beggars, slums, violence. Or was it a

second factor: that in West Bengal a vast concourse was believed to be descending on Calcutta on August 31 from the countryside and the suburbs? Was it wise to let a group do a serious film about so explosive a political situation at this time?

The Government acted. On the evening of Thursday the 27th a dozen gentlemen arrived at the Hindusthan International, visited the rooms of the members of the team and seized their film, all of it unexposed. The crew protested. The director, Chris Goddard, demanded to see warrants, asked where these officers of the law or whatever were from, where was their authority. He was told to be quiet or he would be arrested, though on what charge was not clear. A receipt on plain paper was given for the film, which was taken. Effectively the crew was silenced. They could not now report on West Bengal. (A few days later it was put about in Calcutta that the man in charge of the raid had been 'punished'.)

The position was now serious. The Producer in London—and Morgan, who was still in England—was informed. Peter Ibbotson went to Delhi once more to see if there was any persuasion which ought make the Government change its mind, or if there was any explanation for these bewildering events. He opened negotiations with Mr Bharadwaj of the Press Information Bureau and a confused episode began, not at all helped by the difficulties in reaching London for consultation. But by Sunday, the 31st, general agreement had, it seemed, been reached along these lines: that an official of the Government would accompany the team while filming; that a synopsis of the film story would be provided; that the High Commission in London would be allowed to offer 'guidance' on the film when edited. These terms were transmitted to London where they were agreed upon and on the same Sunday afternoon Morgan took off from London to return to Calcutta. It looked like all was well again: not that the terms were desirable, but they were tolerable.

"Democratic" Communalism

RAMADHAR

The Government, however, had not played its ace. Either out of suspicion—they called it 'clarification'—or even, to put it most malignantly, perhaps a desire not to see the film made, they enlarged on the last point. They now wanted Thames to agree to ship the film through the External Affairs Ministry in Delhi to the High Commission in London who could have the right of veto over the material. When Peter Ibbotson brought this clause back to Calcutta his colleagues found it unacceptable, and so did the Producer in London. Morgan and Goddard called a Press Conference in Calcutta after cabling Mr Bharadwaj asking him to withdraw the new condition and said they could not work on that basis: the Producer in London called a similar conference. Neither side would shift: that was the end.

Precisely how dangerous a precedent the Indian Government was attempting to set scarcely needs adumbrating in great detail. The conditions they were imposing were more stringent than those imposed in any other country. For example, when John Morgan filmed both in China and Russia he was accompanied by a representative either of the foreign office or of the television service. His route was largely laid down by the authorities. But the film was transported to London by the normal airline services. In London it was edited and then, in the case of Russians, shown to them as a matter of courtesy before transmission. The Chinese didn't even want to see theirs. There has never before been a case of a government wanting—a case of a government wanting—a demanding—to see the whole, vast length of film shot in its country. India has set a sad precedent not only for other foreign crews wishing to come to the country, but also for other countries wishing to destroy free reporting. It didn't work this time. The film was not made. The British television audience will not learn, now, about the problems of West Bengal. They may instead conclude that India has something to hide.

IT is hard to find words to describe the extreme sense of distress at the sickening communal riots recurring every now and then in this country—the killing, burning, maiming and mutilation of men, women and children at the slightest pretext in the name of God, religion, culture and language.

Before the advent of freedom we could blame the British for their divide and rule policy. They left India more than 22 years ago but the record of communalism has been particularly bleak after freedom came to this country. Moreover, the maladies of casteism, regionalism and other forms of communalism have been added to it. Whom can we blame now for all this?

The principal cause of this process of disintegration is the institution of parliamentary democracy as we have practised it all these years and of which we seem to be so enamoured. By choosing parliamentary democracy as the way of life, particularly after the fashion of the British, we elected for basically a classridden society. Outwardly this step appeared to be a radical departure from the past. It was a departure alright inasmuch as the British had left and political power had come into the hands of the Indian leaders. But this change did not affect the structure of our society; everything remained the same except that in free India opportunists of every possible description started having a field day. Radicalism and progressivism etc were certainly in the air but they remained empty slogans without making any impact anywhere.

Nehru's leadership appeared promising because he called himself a socialist and was well versed in socialist lore. But these expectations did not materialise. The leadership (obviously Nehru's) remained contented that elections were taking place in due time on the basis of adult franchise and India acquired the reputation of

being the biggest and the largest democracy of the world.

But in a class-ridden society, elections become an art of manoeuvring in the hands of the clever and the unscrupulous. The common man is manipulated into voting opportunists and unscrupulous people into power and, what is more, once elected these upstarts discover ways and means of perpetuating themselves in the seats of power by the same process of cunning electioneering which becomes a routine in the course of time. But it is not possible to provide for all the unscrupulous people through these manipulated and stage-managed elections; whoever is already in the seat of power (as Nehru was) has the advantage of using the State apparatus and other resources of the State to get themselves returned again and again. So those who are left out (and they are quite a legion) have to devise how to get in somehow. They stop at nothing in this business of manipulation to get power even though in a small measure, compared to that of those already in it, and this process continues ad infinitum. Communalism becomes a powerful weapon in the hands of these men in the game of power and it develops very subtle forms and shades and sometimes parades itself in very respectable garbs like that of secularism, protecting the interests of the minorities including their culture and language and provision of safeguards and reservations etc to backward communities and scheduled castes and tribes and so on and so forth.

At the same time the so-called representatives of the majority community (the same variety of unscrupulous people described above) come out with their own manufactured grievances about the basic interests of the majority being sacrificed at the altar of the supposed welfare of minorities and thus the whole scene becomes confused and everybody

blames everybody else. Those who are in power blame Hindu communal bodies like the Jana Sangh, RSS, the Shiv Sena and the Hanuman Sena, for engineering communal riots to win over the allegiance of the Hindus in order to come to power whenever they can manage to do so. On the other hand these bodies blame the party, which is in control of the government, for its inefficiency in controlling the communalism of the minorities, alleging at the same time that it is inciting these minorities for its own selfish ends. In this extremely ugly situation the most unfortunate fact emerges that all of them are right in making these allegations. These vocal sections represent vested interests of one kind or the other and they are always trying to exploit the situation by claiming to serve the interests of the communities on whose behalf they profess to speak. The truth of the matter is that they represent no one except themselves though to all appearances they seem to represent someone in some measure. So in the last analysis what we see on the Indian scene today is the colossal failure of parliamentary democracy as we have managed to organise it, i.e., we want democracy and class privileges to go together. We are reaping what we have sown.

Getting to the Top

It is obvious that since elections offer the easiest means to prosperity and power at different levels of society the vocal sections of all communities struggle among themselves to get to the top by seeking success at the polls by whatever manner they can think of. At the initial stages, after the attainment of freedom, elections were comparatively a straightforward affair inasmuch as the Congress and its leaders were extremely popular and anyone chosen by them to contest seats for state legislatures or Parliament was easily elected. But the leaders even at that time did not attempt a basic change in the structure of society to end class divisions and offer equal opportunities to all sections of the people. Only slogans

of freedom, democracy and socialism etc were raised while the people at lower levels continued to suffer as before. Discontent and disenchantment brought further pressures and counter-pressures and the Congress and its leaders started manoeuvring things to perpetuate their rule as long as possible. While they continued to talk glibly of socialism, democracy and freedom, their underlings in the party, obviously with their approval, selected election candidates with an eye on complete success on the basis of communalism, casteism and regionalism.

Even Nehru, while outwardly retaining the posture of a socialist, democrat and secularist, made subtle calculations about how best to retain power in his own hands through the overall success of the Congress party. He projected himself as a progressive radical and secularist and therefore as the champion of the minorities, particularly the Muslims. He succeeded so well that he managed to gain the total confidence of the Muslims though, in practice, he could never manage to give them security. Perhaps the obvious calculation was that Hindus were divided into too many factions and some factions would always continue to support him, particularly because he was already in power, and if the minorities, particularly the biggest of them, the Muslims, supported him en bloc he would manage to remain in the saddle continuously. This calculation unfortunately worked rather well! It is a sad commentary on the leadership of Nehru and his associates that the largest number of riots occurred and the largest number of Muslims were killed during their regime. Not only that. In spite of the oft-repeated secularist policies of the Nehru era Muslims were never extended the legitimate facilities of employment. Even in the public undertakings and local bodies it was hard to find jobs for them. All this has resulted in extreme hardship for them and though they have always been poor their economic plight has been much worse in the post-independence period.

This is nothing new. A vast majority of Hindus are also poor. This process is the natural outcome of a class-ridden society. Nehru himself symbolised the class distinctions of the society he led and ruled. The most surprising and unfortunate part of the situation is the fact that Muslims never seemed to realise it. Or perhaps the privileged ones among the Muslims did not want to realise it. Even if they had known the truth somehow what could they do? The basic nature of society being what it is, there was no way out.

Nehru's Daughter

The same Nehru strategy of wooing the minorities, particularly Muslims, continues to this day. It is, of course, no longer subtle. Everything is clear. The imperatives of the situation are now much more compelling than ever. Nehru's fears of a possible fall from the seat of power were more imaginary than real. They are absolutely real now for his daughter. So the delicacy of keeping a pretence has no scope whatsoever in her case. Everything is overground. No sense of shame need bother the top players of the power-game because they can no longer afford this luxury.

This inevitably led to majority communalism taking more aggressive and militant forms so that all or most of the Hindus can be brought within one fold and those claiming to represent them can gain power by getting themselves elected by the votes of the majority community. This has strengthened the RSS and the Jana Sangh. Those who cannot benefit adequately by these processes have sought refuge in regionalism. Others have resorted to exploitation of the language problem and a powerful party has emerged in the south, capturing power by the electoral process in one whole State on the plank of opposition to a north Indian language. Partitions of several States have occurred on flimsy grounds because this helped some vocal sections of the regions concerned to get power in one form or the other. The common people are

Frankly Speaking

SANJOY

incited to fight on all conceivable grounds by interested parties, who have the gift of the gab, leading to widespread bloodshed of innocent people for no obvious rhyme or reason. The strangest part of this queer situation is that throughout the long period of such happenings, no important person of any community has ever been killed in these riots. It is always the poor who die though they never know what communalism means. In all such riots it is this vague cause, for which the people are made to fight, which is the first casualty. Yet the process keeps on repeating itself.

It is encouraging, however, to note that a new force is gradually emerging in the eastern and south-eastern parts of the country which has started causing tremors in the hearts of the privileged and the dark forces of New Delhi and State capitals and party bosses of all descriptions, hues and colours. Recently a similar organisation in East Pakistan sent greetings to their counterparts in India (West Bengal), saying that they have gained encouragement and inspiration from them. In view of the animosity between India and Pakistan (whether East or West) ever since the partition of the country, such a communication from East Pakistan to India is a big event. It also proves that communal barriers are artificial barriers and that they will disappear as and when people embark on the revolutionary path of building up a classless society.

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DURGAPADA DAS

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SEPTEMBER 12, 1970

MANY outsiders, it is reported, hold Calcutta in contempt: What are the crazy Bengalis up to? The rest of India is going ahead—they measure progress in terms of their own affluence and perquisites—while Calcutta is grinding to a halt and the screeching is heard throughout West Bengal. The Bengalis cannot be redeemed because they do not listen to reason, to the call for law and order, to the call for greater production; they are bent upon harakiri of sorts.

No doubt what is happening in West Bengal does confuse the sons of the soil themselves. We have had months of inter-party strife. Political differences here are so passionate that partisans seem to live on razor's edge—often literally. Owing to a combination of circumstances, we have reached a stage where physical assault and annihilation are looked upon as the way out. The newspapers every day report a few incidents. One does not mind counter-attacks on authority: repression means or should mean resistance. What is baffling is the cult of the dagger or the bomb practised by different parties against each other. And this cult, let us be frank enough to repeat, is one of the products of the United Front days.

There are friends who are not perturbed by this phenomenon. To them all this is part of the historical process. As the issues get sharper and louder so do the dagger and the bomb. What matters is the over-all direction in which things are moving.

Let us take the direction which the CPM wants the people to take. It is the best organised party with a big mass base. But this mighty party wants elections. If Mrs Gandhi announces that these will be held in November, most CPM-led agitations will cease. The CPM thinks that, given the present mood of the people, it may even be returned with absolute majority. The Eight Party Combina-

tion has exposed itself as associates, if not hirelings, of the establishment. The Congress, either R or O, is not a force. The less said about the party of jotedars, the Bangla Congress, the better. The massive police repression, the crying unemployment, rising prices—will all influence the people to vote CPM—the party which promises relief, if not revolution. Revolution is an imponderable. Relief is all that the people want. Besides, revolution can be engineered from within the government.

Even if the CPM does not emerge with absolute majority, there will again be another united front, which will ensure relief. Things will again move along familiar lines. Let the frontwallahs snarl at each other. There will be higher salaries for a section of the community, gherao again will be effective in some cases, there will be less police repression, the peasants will get more land, and we shall all stumble along. But where?

The question of destination may not be so important to large numbers of people. But the idea of a violent shake-up of the whole system is striking roots. And in this matter, the Naxalites, however incomprehensible some of their tactics and utterances are and whatever be their setbacks, have acted and are acting as catalysts. This explains why the dasas of the CPM are so intolerant regarding the CP(ML). Elections-before-everything is too tame a slogan for the serious-minded among the restless CPM rank and file, and there is always the chance of large chunks going over to the CP(ML). If the Naxalites were mature enough and less intolerant themselves, the erosion in the CPM rank and file would have been much faster. But what one can expect in the present context is the elimination of increasing numbers of Naxalites and some Marxists (many of the murders, patient investigation will show, are the work of police agents and a party which accepts

police versions as truth even for temporary advantages, is no party at all). Since the Marxists enjoy the surface facilities of freedom of assembly and limited action, since they have papers of their own with large circulations, their ability to influence the non-committed is considerable. What the Naxalites rely on is action. They think that action will convert people to their point of view. But action without politicisation, without incessant explanation, is not enough, particularly when the CPM too can go in for limited action to thrill its supporters and blame any reverses on the reactionary combination of the Government, the Bangla Congress, the CPI and the Naxalites.

If this writer were asked in which direction he believes, he will rely on instinct or emotion rather than reason: the future belong to the line of struggle advocated by the Naxalites, though he will be hard put to it to rationalise many of the things that are happening, for example, the bombs or crackers burst in schools and colleges. But one gets used to so many things. Two months ago, this writer was disturbed when he heard that some images had been broken by boys seven or eight years old. The latest reports from Kumartuli—later denied—left him indifferent. All the same, it can be predicted that there is going to be a backlash, if the idea planted is acted upon, particularly because puja pandals these days are adorned with various kinds of red flags. It is a pity that Lenin and Stalin were males. Otherwise some images of Durga would have been fashioned after them.

To go back to the beginning. People in Delhi or Bombay or Madras may think that the Bengalis have gone crazy and there may be something in West Bengal which is on the border line. But all in all, it is better to live in this dirty, bustling, mad city than to be in air-conditioned morgues and pursue the so-called good life. And, to be provincial, may we remind the wise men that West Bengal has been bled hollow by New Delhi, and that their attitude is the same as

that of Britons towards India? The blood-suckers should stop bothering about Bengal.

A sort of indifference to the rest of the country is developing in this part. Last week when two friends dropped in and said the day called for celebrations, this writer was puzzled. Then he remembered that Mrs Gandhi had won another famous battle in the Lok Sabha, that of the privy purses. Arithmetically, the centre will save some Rs 4.80 crores—the Centre's minions will be spending much more on police operations in West Bengal. The sum is nothing. As for politics, Mrs Gandhi's leftist stooges will have another opportunity to crow over the courage of the fair lady and be more determined as strike-breakers. When the bill failed to get a two-thirds majority... Oh, the heavens did not come down. The success, the setback and the derecognition were not enough to shake people out of their apathy in water-logged Calcutta.

Book Review

NECESSITY AND FREEDOM :

An Introduction to the study of Society.

By Joan Robinson.

Allen and Unwin. Price 12sh.

IN her latest work *Necessity and Freedom, an introduction to the study of society*, Mrs Joan Robinson has sketched the development of various social forms, their origin and role from the neolithic age to our times. The main line of her argument is that the economic interpretation of history is the principal element, but it is only one element. In layers below it lie geography, biology and psychology and above it there are social and political relationships. These forces, originating from the economic base, have substantially affected the historical process.

The necessity of food procurement and protection from predators led to group life and submission of members of a group to a code of behaviour. Group life requires com-

munication of attitudes and this ultimately helped develop language which differentiated man from other members of the primate. The invention of language had profound economic consequences. It created a new social relationship and spurred ritual demonstrations of various forms leading to brisk economic activity, at least indirectly; it urged man to extract surplus, accumulate stock, trade in wares having luxury value. However, the development of the concept of territory had direct economic bearing; for example, lack of a particular food item caused exchange to take place between territories and international trade of a sort developed. Warfare also developed as a kind of international relation. The origin of war is obscure; in any case once it developed into a war of conquest it initiated important changes in social relationships; a surplus had to be created to feed the warring members of a clan; organisation and weaponry were improved. Moreover, the conqueror could enjoy the surplus of the conquered and take slaves.

The social relationships, however, took new forms with the discovery of agriculture, in settled form of course, probably by the accident of bushfire. The introduction of the plough and the growth of numbers upset the balance of land to labour and feudalism was born. Under this social form new landed barons owned most of the land and lived on unearned income (e.g. rent and interest). Serfs who constituted the majority had little or no land; they worked more but ate less. A class of artisans also grew up around large estates to provide primitive tools, arms and goods having status value to feudal princes and their cohorts.

However, within this feudal framework and in contradiction to it, a bourgeois class was coming into being and a money economy was replacing the simple barter system of feudal times. Of course, the process was far from uniform, varying from place to place according to the specific conditions of the situation. But it was most pronounced in Great Bri-

tain which enjoyed certain historical advantages conducive to the growth of commercial capitalism, such as the wool trade, and the enclosure movement. Moreover expanding foreign trade, new colonies, and profits from the slave trade aided this process. National patriotism proved the necessary spiritual booster. On the political front this class contradiction festered rankly and led to the Civil War which established the political hegemony of the bourgeoisie.

In between, the cotton textile industry was flourishing in Great Britain. Unlike wool, it had certain advantages. It was uniform and amenable to standardised production and this enabled the new bourgeois class to apply scientific technology and increase profits greatly. A spiral action set in and gradually the existing production relation was changed qualitatively and modern capital ousted the trader class and struck foot's. The basic characteristics of modern capitalism are the hypertrophy of the nation state, the application of science to technology, complete alienation of labour from the ownership of means of production (the process actually began in the preceding phase) and the penetration of money values in every aspect of life reducing everything, including labour-power, to an exchangeable commodity.

The process of capitalist industrialisation, aided by new inventions and opening up of new territories, set in a secular boom, but it survived on historical accidents and was not a rational self-regulating process. There was, therefore, nothing unnatural when the system slumped into crisis in 1929. This severely jolted the smug complacency of the backers of free trade and after much hobnobbing they came out with the argument that the State should maintain effective demand and near-full employment.

After the war capitalism changed substantially. Its predominant element is monolithic corporations and increasing state concern. The State apparatus—staffed by military industrial personnel—beefed up the system not only by stabilis-

ing the price-line but also by creating a constant market for industrial goods by way of defence programmes.

Another system that branched out of this mainstream is the welfare State. Enlightened self-interest and an increasing working class movement induced the capitalists to frame up a comprehensive welfare programme, particularly evident in the Scandinavian countries. This has considerably raised the living level of workers of these countries and has succeeded in taking the proletariat into their fold. This embourgeoisement of the proletariat is a new phenomenon in the present-day international working class movement. (The welfare State, like the warfare State, is rooted in national egoism).

The Russian Example

Meanwhile, the proletariat captured power in Russia and the Soviet leaders, after delay, which was unavoidable, began to industrialise the country and, in spite of war, caught up with the industrial West quickly. The regime had certain advantages. It could postpone consumption and build up basic industries, gaining from technological innovations perfected under capitalism. Further, the Soviets abolished private interest, enabling them to dispense with the complex financial and fiscal system of a market economy and to plan investment usefully. But the greatest benefit of the regime lay in the spread of education and welfare activities hitherto undreamed of (even in welfare states).

The regime, however, suffered from some important defects. In Russia, industrialisation was not preceded by any thorough land reform. Revolution created numerous peasant proprietorships and the tiny plots so framed were unsuited to improved farming methods and production of surplus. Collectivisation was imposed from above and without adequate political education. As a result much blood was spilled. On the shop floor, the workers were encouraged to produce more by a system of wage differential and this, combined with a privileged schooling system, bred a new elite group of intellectuals and bureaucrats.

Moreover, in the Soviet Union Marxism was reduced to a dogma and any dissenting voice was stifled as reactionary. The entire economy was geared to defence and the cold war justified it. Inefficiency, corruption and wastage of material encouraged by planning in terms of physical resources were rampant.

In spite of this accumulation continued at a fast pace. The general affluence that it entailed encouraged the people to demand an easier life and in certain cases popular discontent burst out into open disapproval of the system. This showed where the Soviet rulers went wrong: they misook the phase of socialist industrialisation as an economic 'law' and with the help of an 'anti-consumer' ideology—at the same time providing material incentives instead of discouraging them, they imposed undue hardships on the consumer, i.e. the Soviet people. (The situation is more or less the same in other European socialist countries).

Some reforms are now being introduced, but the outcome is uncertain. The Yugoslav experiment has flopped. The Soviet Union is experimenting with free market mechanism and the profit incentive to correct past errors. But there is every reason to doubt the efficacy of a tool, oriented to promote sales in a static market, in a system where the material expectations of the people are changing constantly.

Chinese Experiment

Chinese communism, however, is taking a new form. Immediately after liberation, the CPC completed a thoroughgoing land reform. Land was collectivised by stages and the economic relationship of the peasant, raised to the status of middle peasant by reform, was transformed gradually. Production in communes is still for self-subsistence and the surplus, if any, is purchased at a fixed price and the quantities to be sold are fixed by the procurement authorities. Besides, an incessant effort is being made to develop a socialist world outlook in the peasant's mind; collective work and collective ownership

are being encouraged and acquisitiveness discouraged.

In matters of industrialisation, the Chinese planners are showing the same consciousness. They are avoiding centralised administration and trying to "control production and retailing from the wholesale stage." The device has worked successfully so far and there is no reason why it should not work as consumption rises.

But the novelty of Chinese communism lies in the cultural and educational programme and in the relation between the party and the people. The most original and striking of Mao's conceptions concerns the relation of the administration and the professions to the simple workers. Mao observed in Russia that status becomes the basis of privilege when property has been abolished and that, through privileged education, it can become hereditary and form the basis for class. A Communist Party organised in the Stalinist tradition creates a gulf between the rulers and ruled. Moreover, in China, the millennial tradition exalted learning and despised manual work. The roots of class, in the administration and the professions, remained in the ground after property was cut down and would soon sprout again. Therefore, the Chinese leaders laid stress on moral incentives to promote production and fought egoism and privileges of all sorts. The aim of the Chinese education system, based on the thought of Mao Tse-tung is to dig out the roots of privilege, make work honourable, level inequalities and establish the right of the rank and file to criticise the Party and the administration in each line of activity.

Third World

Beyond these two worlds—the socialist world and the advanced industrial nations of the West—lies the Third World. They have different forms of government, but their political freedom is sham. They are being controlled by the U.S. economically. These nations have low per head output of foodstuff and inadequate surplus. Naturally their problem is to get enough investible fund

and direct them to proper channels. To make up paucity of indigenous funds their governments have accepted 'aid' from the developed countries—including Russia in some cases—but in most cases this has proved to be burdensome because of the obligation of interest payment and debt re-imbursement. Some investment activities have been initiated by placements of big undertakings of the West in these lands, but the scope for development in this respect is limited, as it leads to drainage of funds by way of profit repatriation. Moreover, these units through their governments, try to influence the political and economic life of these countries. It is also difficult on the part of these under-developed nations to earn surplus from international commerce. Their efforts to set up import saving industries have reached an impasse because of shortage of spares. On the export side these nations—mostly ex-colonies which have developed their natural resources for the colonists—are hard put to it to sell their conventional merchandise because of competition among themselves. For this, they face an inelastic market dominated by buyers who are by nature of things Western countries. Some of them can manufacture unconventional goods in labour-intensive lines by tariff restrictions put up by the developed nations.

Some countries, particularly India and Mexico, have increased their farm output considerably under capitalistic farming and this has contributed to growth, at least in terms of absolute national income. But this statistical information often distorts the reality. In effect, the peasantry, the mass of the people, have been pushed further down the income ladder by rising prices and a skewed distribution system. The growth of population has made their condition worse.

This population increase is a problem of the rich West also. The affluence of the West depends as much on scientific innovations as on birth control. Here, on the one hand, technology is continuously reducing the man-hour of labour required in production activities and, on the

other, human fecundity is steadily swelling the ranks of job-seekers. The solution lies in adjusting technological progress to the growth of population, but it is doubtful whether technical invention motivated by profit can be so attuned. The mounting numbers in ghettos and the increasing number of hardhats on the campuses show the direction in which things are moving. This situation has disowned the prophets of the 'free world' who tried to conjure up the vision that self-interest can serve the collective good. The problem of new births is also embarrassing the Third World leaders who are busy preserving their rule in the face of refractory peasant masses rising in one country after another. In the meantime, China has shown a different path. She has shown how to develop without accepting the tutelage of the big powers and how to transform huge human reserves—the origin of capital in all ages—into effective capital; of late she is also campaigning for late marriages and a small family. The Chinese experiment will definitely affect the historical process.

This is how Mrs Joan Robinson reasons in her book. It is much too brief, as Mrs Robinson herself admits in the preface, but researchers in social science will find in it useful guidelines.

HIRANMAY DHAR

Clippings

Malle : Naxal or Hindu ?

The (other) Malle film...concentrated on two tribes, the Bonda of Orissa and the Todas of Tamil Nadu. In both the commentary was in a romantic vein, bemoaning the encroachment of modern India into their reserves and the prospect of their disappearance. The Bonda tribe was depicted as being harassed by money-lenders, civil servants and land grabbers from the plains. The Communist effort to arouse them was spotlighted and the commentator referred to the greater communist suc-

cess (meaning Naxalite) in the neighbouring State of Andhra where he said there had been a stirring among tribes.

But police violence in the name of the law, that is in the name of the landlords, has restored the law, added the commentator. The Todas were pictured as an idyllic utopian community living in total freedom. Their reported practice of initiating girls at 13 into sex by experienced men, their system of free love, communal property and absence of laws or violence were mentioned as proof. But here again modern India was encroaching, threatening to destroy "this last representative of free society which is free from hunger, violence, war and prudery."

Three other items concerned the Christians of Kerala who were said to show an inferiority complex vis-a-vis the Hindus or Europeans; the Jews of Cochin, who were rapidly disappearing by emigration or fall in birth rate. Here, however, the leader of the Jews, Koder, said that India was the only country in the world which had not persecuted the Jews. (*Hindustan Times*)

It is only natural for the Government to react wildly against these films. I myself have seen the film "Calcutta" by Louis Malle and consider it to be the best account of present-day India I have come across. The film presents a true picture of what is going on in Calcutta, and in fact the rest of the country. Furthermore, it illustrates vividly the system of oppressor and the oppressed that exists in India today and shows the ruling class to be what they really are: corrupt, degenerate, ignorant, incapable of developing the country, incapable of taking one step that can possibly raise the productive or purchasing power of the Indian masses. Louis Malle has also shown the people of the world that the Indian masses have at last realised the false concepts of constitutional parliamentary democracy and have started to wage a revolutionary class struggle under the leadership of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist). [Letters, *Hindustan Times*].

Louis Malle... if I am given an option to choose from the doctrinaire type of prescriptions as to how my life is to be run, I would any day choose Hinduism which allows me the maximum latitude.

* *

I am not a bit angry with M. Malle because I can, if facilities are provided, produce a full length documentary on the 35,000 prostitutes of Paris or hundreds of brothel houses in London. The coloured people spend about pounds 50,000 a week on prostitution in the city of Birmingham alone. The question remains: how will British sensitivity react if this side of their seamy public life alone is portrayed? How would the French feel if the nations in Asia and Africa are made to believe that France is nothing but a great red lamp area? (Letters, *Hindustan Times*)

* *

... Recently when I was in Banaras I saw tourists (elderly evangelists, miniskirted girls, hippies—masculine, feminine and nude) wallowing in our squalor, counting dead bodies with their canons and zeisses and buying—oh so much of junk. At the burning ghat I saw a priest displaying a "Travellers cheques Accepted" sign. I heard that tourists paid as much as 15 dollars for each shot of our sacred process of burning bodies and letting them adrift in the river. They love our squalor. They want our streets that way; complete with open-air tiger or a Maharaja. Why don't we cash in when the going is good? We need the money don't we? We need it for the enormous overtime to be spent in Government offices preparing statements. (Letters, *Hindustan Times*)

* *

...I shall give to the Leftists and others in Calcutta who get angry at the publicity given to their city, some incidental information which will surprise them. In spite of the lurid picture of Calcutta which is presented to them, the most perceptive, educated, and intelligent foreigners from the West take a very favourable view of the Bengali intellectuals of Calcutta and give an un-

expected interpretation to what is happening there. Both in Delhi and in England I have found that many of these observers think that something of great value and significance for the rest of India is coming out of the anarchy and disintegration that is being seen in Calcutta. They do not agree with my diagnosis that what is being really seen is the decomposition of Bengali life and culture without any positive feature in it, and they seem to me to accept the claims of the extreme Leftists at quite their face value. In fact, an English journalist who is regarded in official circles as an anti-Indian writer has surprised me by saying that he thinks a social and political movement leading towards a renovation of life in India is coming from the Naxalites and the other young Bengali extremists.

Apart from their interpretation of what is happening in Calcutta, they speak with sincere appreciation and admiration, which I do not share, of the level of mental life in the city. They tell me that it is a most pleasing experience to listen to the intellectuals of Calcutta, where, they add, they meet living minds, and not minds benumbed by status and routine in the bureaucracy as in New Delhi. I tell them that to judge the mental level of any place by the standard of New Delhi is to give to that place an unfair advantage.

...It is strange that the class of people in India who are least in touch with the country's traditional culture and are almost wholly denationalized in their habits of life, besides being quite incapable of forming any idea of Indian life and culture from direct experience or study of the original sources in Sanskrit or the modern Indian languages, namely, the Anglicized upper middle-class in comfortable circumstances and displaying the most egotistic absorption in their class interest, are the people who have now become the most ferocious of the chauvinists in a negative expression of Indian nationalism.

...The truth of the matter is that it is the false version of contemporary India put out by the people

which induces foreign observers to show that there are aspects of Indian life and culture in the anthropologist's sense which the ruling class is doing its utmost to hide. That is to say, the anxiety of the class to present a mere image of India, after their heart and consistent with their interests, provokes foreigners to stress that side of India which they ignore or suppress. (Nirad C. Chaudhuri in *Hindusthan Standard*).

Letter

Role Of CPM

Mr Prabir Kumar Mukherjee (August 8) must be thinking his readers are very naive. And how careless it was of him to suggest that the CPM leadership viewed the Naxalite leaders and cadres in the countryside from a different attitude. Jyoti Basu, when he was Police Minister ordered the Eastern Frontier Rifles, sent to Midnapore by him after consultations in Calcutta with the Swatantra police of Orissa and the SSP-Congress police of Bihar, to shoot to kill the Naxalites leading the struggling peasants at Debra and Gopiballavpur. They shed crocodile tears for the Srikakulam victims of the white terror while providing the Andhra police with free justification for their conduct by calling revolutionaries 'anarchists' and 'terrorists'. Didn't the description of armed guerilla activities as anarchic acts aiming at the subversion of society, preclude the possibility of the CPM's appealing for armed action, should it decide to begin it at a future date as promised? If a real struggle was intended, it was a queer idea to lay down the weapons with which it would have to be waged. But the revolutionary threats of the CPM are mere attempts to intimidate the antagonists and fool the people. The blaring announcements by Promode Dasgupta & Co that land seizures will continue, that a 100,000-strong Red Guard is ready, that Writers Buildings will be besieged, that there will be a rebellion, die away in

a pusillanimous snarl: as soon as the struggle has to begin, the actors cease to take themselves seriously, and the action collapses like a pricked bubble. General strikes are organised not to concentrate the anger of the people for further onslaughts but to let the steam off. Not infrequently the working class movement is utilised for extremely partisan ends. The CPM is now busy in containing the working class upsurge within trade union limits, instead of forcing the adversary to fight at the moment of political enthusiasm. They let the heightened popular passion in the wake of the Naxalbari peasant revolt wear itself out in the repeated provisional election game; they let the revolutionary energy satiate itself with constitutional successes, dissipate itself in petty intrigues, hollow declamations and sham movements. They are drawing closer and closer to the parties of 'law and order'.

Contending that no real cultural progress is conceivable unless the semi-colonial, semi-feudal economy is abolished and unless the servile and compromising tradition of the past is broken, the young innovators in the city, confronted with the extremely difficult problem of organising the much talked but least seriously meant revolution are, in their immaturity, making grave blunders to the advantage of the CPM. But, pardon me, gentlemen of the CPM, what right have you to reproach the Naxalites since you took part in worse things—attacking the Chittaranjan Hospital at Gobra, killing a headmaster at Hethora right on the school compound; to mention only two among the host of misdeeds?

It was not the Naxalites but the revolutionary Police Minister, Jyoti Basu, who directly instigated the inter-party clashes by inciting his partymen to take the law into their own hands to punish the Naxalite 'conspirators' after the Eden Hindu Hostel incident last year. Yet as soon as the inevitable reaction sets in, some people feign innocence, as though this was some ugly incident which has suddenly appeared on the horizon.

Now the CPM leadership, along with the Swatantra Party, the Nijlin-

gappa Congress, PSP and Jana Sangh, is egging on Indira's police to further kill and torture the Naxalites so that their political supremacy can be confirmed by such a measure. They are trying to cover up the CPM-police combined terror against the Naxalites by raising the bogey of police-Naxal collusion. Never has a pretender speculated more stupidly on the stupidity of the masses. Meek as mice before the strong, they are so shameless as to threaten the young Naxalites with dire consequences once the CRP is withdrawn, as if the CRP is protecting them. Never before have the young communists in India, excepting in Telengana, suffered in such large numbers such mental and physical tortures in the police dungeons as the young Naxalites are doing. And never before in India's political history has one party maligned another party in such a cruel manner.

CPM cadres used to complain that Naxalites become active only when the UF is in power. Now that the Congress is in power why do they grudge the Naxalite their activities? And are these activities confined to West Bengal and Kerala alone?

"The dialectical method regards as important primarily not that which at the given moment seems to be durable and yet is already beginning to die away but that which is arising and developing, even though at the given moment it may appear to be not durable, for the dialectical method considers invincible only that which is arising and developing". CPM revisionism is bound to die away and revolutionary Marxism, i.e. Naxalism, purged of its errors, blunders and weaknesses, is bound to triumph and the day of reckoning will come.

SANJIB MITRA
Calcutta

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