

# frontier

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## LIBERATE LENIN

A centenary celebration, by definition, adulates the memory of one who had succeeded in whatever his mission was. The non-successes are non-celebrities; the social snobs are not interested in them. It is a technique with the class enemies to try to appropriate, with a time-lag, the heroes from history's pages. Danton thus becomes as passé as Marie Antoinette; footnoting of Marx's writings turns out to be the sublimatory passion of rich American spinsters; Rosa Luxemburg, who, a safe half-century ago, died a grisly death at the barricades suddenly emerges as the La Passionaria of the social democrats.

Lenin could scarcely avoid being overtaken by a similar fate. On this centenary occasion, the hucksters, predictably, are back at the game. The Kautskyisation of Lenin goes on every day. The external circumstances are wonderfully propitious for such vulgar pastimes. As the once monolithic structure of the communist movement continues to split and splinter, social enemies jostle in. Polycentrism breeds new affections; rabid reactionaries become much dearer friends than erstwhile comrades on the fighting fronts; what is worse, Marxist-Leninist scriptures are quoted to justify "objectively", the curious positions taken; debauchery substitutes the Revolution; cadres are asked to don the role of black-legs, so that the property of the exploiters could be defended against the onslaught of the workers; partisans—first-rate revolutionary material, devout, steeled in courage—are done to death; collaboration with the enemy is flaunted as Leninist doctrine dialectically applied.

All this is a great pity; but then, again, all this is part of the historical process itself. The bourgeoisie and the intellectuals find it relatively easy to creep into the leadership of the working-class movement in quasi-colonial, under-developed societies; doctrine-fetishism—and purposive doctrine-fetishism at that—is their particular forte. Leave it to them to obfuscate Lenin. The setting changes, but for the past fifty years this conspiracy of subversion through adulation and subsequent romanticisation has gone on and on in different climes.

In this centenary year, the prime task is therefore not different from what it ought to be in any other year. The task is short and simple: liberate Lenin. Liberate him from the clutches of the social democrats and the social imperialists, liberate him from the penumbra of canonizing

footnotes of Western scholars. Lenin preached class hatred; let not the claptrap of a national democratic front be allowed to conceal that fact. The ideal party of the proletariat, Lenin was categorical, was a *fighting* party; a party which claims to represent the proletariat and yet is averse to a few breaking of heads and attacks on exploiters' property, is a sham. And for those who are scandalised by the notion of partisan warfare, he had this to say:

It is not partisan acts which disorganize the movement, but the weakness of a party which is incapable of taking such acts *under its control*. That is why the anathemas which we Russians usually hurl against partisan acts are combined with secret, casual, unorganized partisan acts which really do disorganize the party. Being incapable of understanding the historical conditions that give rise to this struggle, we are incapable of neutralising its noxious aspects. Yet the struggle is going on. It is engendered by powerful political and economic causes. It is not in our power to eliminate these causes or to eliminate this struggle. Our complaints against partisan warfare are completely against our party weakness in the matter of *insurrection*.

On the other hand, the danger may also lie in precisely such acts of quotation-mongering. Quotations are what makes one of them. To interpret Lenin is not necessarily to be faithful to him. Lenin made the Revolution: the propensity of the bulk of those who refer to tracts like *The State and Revolution* or *A Great Beginning* is to stifle the revolutionary urges. There is no patenting of the communist label, and the use of the red flag is free. Thus those who have devoured the Revolution, those who have debased it, and those who would like to have none of it, are entered into a grand contract. Even at the cost of gouging out of some eyes, or worse, Lenin has to be salvaged from their feudal-colonial hold. The hero has to be restored to the masses.

## Police Versus People

A West Bengal police official has said in exasperation that if some 2000 peasants seized land in a particular case, not more than 200 would be political elements and the rest would be roughs. How arduous the task of the police is, tackling this large mass of delinquent people! One did not know that a West Bengal village contained so many rowdies. No wonder the police have to widen and step up their activities.

Detailed reports are being published in left party journals in Calcutta of a large-scale landlord-police offensive in the countryside. The stories of repression do not find a place in the non-party, 'popular' dailies. But some reports about events elsewhere that do sneak in speak volumes. In Durgapur, following trouble between students the CRP moved in, rounded up about 500, and after close cross-examination, 11 students were detained, it is alleged, with the collusion of CPM elements and on the basis of 'previous intelligence reports'. The CRP, we were told by Mrs Indira Gandhi, had been deployed in West Bengal to protect Central Government property. Is the Regional Engineering College in Durgapur a vital Central property? The same college was the scene of a savage raid by the police on June 2 last year during which one student was killed in the random firing and scores, including teachers and other staff, were injured. So, intelligence reports about this college must be quite comprehensive.

Durgapur is singled out here because not much fuss was made about the use of the CRP in an educational institution there or in Suri, or their presence in large numbers in Santiniketan and Sriniketan though deployment in other areas under the control of the various ex-UF parties is condemned. But to our knowledge, the deployment of the CRP in Burdwan on the day the CPM held a public meeting was not deplored. In fact, we seem to have taken the CRP for granted despite verbal protests. The armed gendarmes of the Centre

are respectable now. A battalion is being sent to Midnapore to befriend the Eastern Frontier Rifles.

That landlord-police repression would be let loose in the countryside and industrialists would again be high and mighty should have been expected by the parties once represented in the UF. It was their duty to have devised counter-action. But inter-party clashes undermined both political morale and the basis of united action, and the peasants and workers would now have to pay a heavy price.

The death of an SSP demonstrator in New Delhi last week at the hands of the police once again showed how ruthless this force can be, even when there is little provocation. The demonstrator armed, no doubt; some of the Chavanist tribals just tried to 'dance their way through' the police cordon around Parliament. But the reaction was brutal. It was not the first time that the Chavanist forces went berserk. They had gone wild during the partial strike of Central Government employees in 1968, causing death and damage. If the police can be so ruthless at the Centre, ruled by the 'daughter of the revolution,' one can imagine how they would behave, in collusion with landlords and industrialists, in a state riven by inter-party clashes and now under President's rule.

It is not yet too late to organise the people against repression, though it may be very difficult. Those who fought each other for land and other benefits the other day cannot close their ranks overnight. But they have to. It is a test of their powers of endurance and grit. It is also a test of the courage and honesty of the rank and file, of the volunteers of the various parties. What are they doing? If the awakening in the countryside has been wide and lasting, why not set up self-defence units? The sowing season, a season of trouble (is approaching and the Governor is mighty anxious for the restoration of seized land to 'rightful' owners.

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## Designs For A Change

*A correspondent writes:*

The left parties in West Bengal are holding their cards close to their chests. None is prepared to disclose what its intentions really are. The innumerable public meetings that are being held by the left leaders are elaborate exercises in evasion and equivocation. No party has so far admitted that it is prepared to form a ministry, though all parties are furiously politicking for it. The underground moves will surface when the time is opportune. In the meantime, every party is trying, each in its own way, to create a climate congenial for induction of a new ministry. The Bangla Congress has carried its quarrel with the CPM from the Secretariat and the Assembly to the districts; Mr Ajoy Mukherjee is spouting venom against the CPM as the villain of the piece. His purpose is to isolate the CPM so that public reaction to the formation of a non-CPM ministry by him may remain within bounds. The mini-Front of eight parties which pretend to be to the left of the Bangla Congress are assisting him as far as they can within the limitations imposed on them by their pretensions. They have raised a chorus of protest against police repression under the new regime, but that does not prevent them from siding with the Bangla Congress which is advocating continuance of President's rule because of its commendable handling of the law and order situation. Nor have the open overtures of the Bangla Congress to the Congress (R) scared the eight parties which profess to be dead set against any such dangerous liaison.

The seemingly contradictory stands of the Bangla Congress and the eight-party alliance are all of a piece. They are treading different paths by arrangement and with full knowledge of a pre-determined rendezvous for ministry-making a few months hence. The Bangla Congress, which has cast off its leftist mask, is now in a position to be more forthright than the

parties which have not; it has, therefore, adopted a policy of unabashed touting for admission of the Congress (R) to the sanctum sanctorum of power. Others cannot take to such a direct method and have to be more crafty. They are shedding glycerine tears over the demise of the UF and crying themselves hoarse for its restoration knowing fully that the Bangla Congress will not agree to their proposal and the CPM cannot agree because of the impossible conditions set by them. At the same time, they are up against President's rule which has restored police terror in the name of law and order. The purpose of this two-pronged campaign is to confront the people with two choices—President's rule and a mini-Front ministry without the CPM, the latter because it is the CPM which wrecked the original UF and is still reluctant to mend its ways to make revival of the 14-party Front possible. Another mid-term poll may be a third choice; but the eight parties are silent over this. If they raise this demand at all, they will do it after the monsoon has set in so that there may not be any question of a mid-term poll before next winter; any proposal for it then may be reasonably rejected by the Centre on the ground of parliamentary elections only a year after. The aim of the eight-party campaign to be launched later this month is to create a situation in which they hope the people will accept a mini-Front ministry under Mr Ajoy Mukherjee's leadership ignoring its open or hidden ties with the Congress (R).

The CPM's keenness to form a ministry to end President's rule may be no less. But this is one of the instances where there is a will but not a way. With almost all left parties arrayed against it the CPM can form a ministry only if there are defections on a large scale from other parties. To induce such massive defections is clearly beyond the capacity of the CPM. But will another election, as demanded by the CPM, ensure a stable and purposeful government to the State? The CPM is not yet in a position to set up can-

didates in all the 280 constituencies, far less to secure an absolute majority in the Assembly. Its performance in a future election may even be poorer than last year's, for it is clear now that in the next election the left parties will fight one another through at least two hostile alliances to the delight of the Congress. Even if the people are sick of coalitions, they will have no choice. After the disintegration of the Congress, the only party which could hope to form a ministry on its own in the foreseeable future was the CPM; but partly because of its own failings and partly because of the jealousies of its fraternal parties in the UF it is no longer in that position. This is not a plea for continuance of President's rule. There may be a difference of opinion about other aspects of the people's verdict in two consecutive elections in West Bengal; the only thing about which there should be no doubt is that they voted against Congress rule. The present regime is, therefore, an imposition, a reversal of the people's will. President's rule should end immediately but with that will not end the travails of West Bengal. The CPM has to think of other means, but is the leadership capable of such thinking?

## Faces Of Freedom

What the USA has done to the liberty of other peoples needs no recounting. Ask any Vietnamese. But no less revealing is what it has done to the liberty of its own people. Eleven per cent of its people are Negroes or of other coloured origin, conveniently described as black. Even according to very white estimates, about 30% of the U.S. black population live below the "poverty level", with an unemployment rate twice as high as among the whites. At least a quarter of all black housing is unfit for human habitation. It is claimed that the conditions have improved in recent years; yet 50% more black people since 1963 think that only violence is the answer to their problems.

But if the blacks seek violence to end their misery, the whites too are being increasingly drawn to violence by various pulls of a paranoid psyche. Violent crime in the USA has reached an all-time high, and life in Chicago, New York or even Washington today is much less safe than it was in Narkeldanga during the worst phase of the United Front's inter-party clashes.

Occasionally there are desperate gestures even by baffled white youth. There were several bomb explosions in U.S. towns last month; in one explosion a courthouse was seriously damaged. There were also a series of violent demonstrations by students, some of whom set fire to a branch of a big bank in California. It would, however, be wrong to see in such violence the stirrings of a revolutionary movement or even signs of a sustained campaign of conscious protest. The sporadic disturbances are rather the symptoms of a deep-seated disease from which both the demonstrators and their opponents suffer, but which produces frustration and anger only in certain sections. But so shaky are the defenders of American freedom that the slightest sign of dissidence makes them fear the worst. Soon after last month's bomb explosions President Nixon proposed legislation providing for the death penalty for bombings in which people were killed and up to 20 years' imprisonment in cases in which people were injured. An omnibus anti-crime Bill has since been introduced; its provisions are so harsh that even a Southern conservative Senator has described it as a blue-print for a police State and "a garbage pail of repressive, nearsighted, intolerant, unfair and vindictive legislation". The Bill places the police virtually above the law.

In spite of criticism from certain quarters, the legislation will perhaps be finally approved, because the Nixon Administration's hysteria over law and order is no less advanced than lately witnessed in West Bengal. And Nixon has his "silent majority" to support him in every reactionary

measure. Even before he introduced his new Bill, there were many cases of unbelievable police violence. Two months ago Governor Ronald Reagan of California, called in troops to put down demonstrations by university students, and last year *Newsweek* reported: "Under cover of Governor Reagan's three-month-old 'state of extreme emergency', police have gone on a riot, displaying a lawless brutality equal to that in Chicago, along with weapons and techniques that even the authorities in Chicago did not dare to employ." Now this will probably be nationwide practice. The "silent majority" has already

spoken up; earlier this month thousands of freedom-loving Americans demonstrated in Washington demanding a military victory in Vietnam, war against international communism and stricter racial segregation. They carried Bibles, claiming that their demands were supported by God. The demonstration was addressed by Mr George Maddox, former owner of a fried chicken restaurant who was elected Governor of Georgia after winning much popularity by giving customers axe handles with which to beat of impudent Negroes who might want to enter his restaurant.

### *View from Delhi*

## Down The Slippery Slope

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

NOBODY seriously believed the Government would come crashing down over the adjournment motion in the Lok Sabha last Monday. The belligerent stance of the CPI and the DMK held out, at best, the arithmetical possibility of Mrs Gandhi's defeat in the division. The voting pattern (152—113 which gave the Government the lowest ever margin) confirmed the possibility. But it is not arithmetic but the slimy politics of the CPI and the DMK that decided the issue. The CPI's presence in the House thinned down to a mere two, and the DMK's to a measly five at the time of the voting, all the fulminations of Prof Hiren Mukherji and Mr Sezhan earlier notwithstanding. No party found it possible to support the Government over the police savagery on Parliament Street and yet some of the parties did not want to see the Government defeated. The CPI(M)'s confusion at the time of the voting underlined this. Unable to resolve the dialectics of the situation its group seems to have decided that some members should be present in the House to vote with the adjournment motion while others in town

should keep out. Arithmetically it was a defeat for the Government if one adds up the actual strength of all the parties which voted with the adjournment motion. This far outweighs the strength of the minority ruling party. Even politically it was a defeat because a minority government found itself without supporters for the first time in the House. And yet the Government survived.

There is little doubt that the leadership got the biggest jolt of the session. The princes' lobby in the ruling party was thinking of abstaining from the vote if it was sure there was a reasonable chance of defeating the Government. The Telengana lobby was thinking along the same lines. The jaded party whips were running here and there keeping their fingers crossed for luck.

The debate itself proved revealing. At least three speakers from diverse Opposition quarters suggested political motivation behind the outrage. Outside the House, the Prime Minister's lobby has been building up a self-contradictory theory of political motivation behind the incident. One part of it is that the Syndicate engineered it to discredit the Prime

Minister. Another part of it is that the adventurist wing in the SSP with Syndicate leanings embarked on it to embarrass the Prime Minister. The inconvenient fact that the injured included Mr Raj Narain, accused of being pro-Syndicate and Mr George Fernandes who has earned the wrath of the Syndicate by defeating Mr S. K. Patil in Bombay, is sought to be explained with the help of characteristic Right Communist sophistry: Mr Raj Narain received less serious injuries than Mr Fernandes who was nearly done to death. But then one might develop yet another political motivation theory on the basis of the same set of facts. Could it not be that the Prime Minister's camp was behind the police excesses because all the MPs injured on Monday happened to belong to the anti-Indira Gandhi wing of the SSP which is out to defeat the Government? How come the Prime Minister's supporters among the SSP Members of Parliament kept out of the demonstration while Mr S. M. Joshi was part of the demonstration before the police attack and after the attack but not *during* the attack? Or could it be that someone engineered the police attack to discredit Mr Y. B. Chavan? In the past, Mr G. L. Nanda was supposed to have been the victim of such machinations. There is no end to such theories but the fact remains that what happened on Monday led to a rare display of Opposition unity in Parliament, which is a pointer to the basic vulnerability of the Government.

By all accounts Mrs Gandhi's leadership is slipping. A group of five or 10 MPs can start a signature campaign and hold her on a short leash without much effort. The princes'

lobby managed to secure over 60 signatures from the Lok Sabha while the counter-campaign netted about 50 from the two Houses put together. If 50 Lok Sabha members of her party could take a firm stand on any issue and range themselves against the Prime Minister, she would be immobilised. The Government's hedging on the issue of ICS privileges proves the same point. The Government had taken a decision to do away with these privileges and the decision was to be announced when Mr Madhu Limaye's bill came up before the Lok Sabha. But the expected announcement did not come because the leadership developed cold feet amidst vague rumblings of revolt in the party.

#### What About Defence?

Two other issues promise to push Mrs Gandhi into a tight corner during the current session. The CPI(M) has been opposing the heavy defence spending and would have to press a cut motion on this at the demands stage. Even the Swatantra Party and the Jana Sangh would be forced to support the demand. But then, would the CPI and the DMK fall in line? The Prime Minister's camp is very nervy about this. Another issue is the Mysore-Maharashtra border dispute. There is mounting Maharashtrian pressure for an early decision under the threat of boycott of the session by the Maharashtra block. The Government might not be defeated on either of these issues but would be made to realise that it can be bullied into anything that an organised pressure group wants.

Nobody talks of ideology and socialism in the ruling party. The leadership's attitude to the Rajya Sabha election debacle has shocked even the Moscow lobby which is fretting and fuming at the lack of ideology and commitment in everything that is being done. The CPI, like the CPI(M), believed at one stage that Mrs Gandhi would be able to smash the Syndicate and begin depending on them for survival. But Mrs Gandhi knows to her bitter experience that more than the left par-

ties, a certain Marwari industrial house proved more valuable as a prop during the crisis. She cannot afford to alienate the big business and depend on the communists. She has to manoeuvre between both to survive. The two communist parties have surrendered all initiative to the Congress-R though the CPI(M) is trying to retrieve a part of it. But all other parties, including the Swatantra, have managed to retain a good part of their initiative and are in a position to demand a price. At the Pradesh level, some of her supporters betrayed a lack of nerve when they began "unity" talks (in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh for instance) and the Syndicate, enthused by the setbacks suffered by the Prime Minister, is in a position to rebuff such unity efforts and wait for the slow disintegration of the Congress-R. This is the kind of situation parties like the CPI did not bargain for. Anti-Syndicate sloganeering no longer washes with non-Congress parties and the search is already on for an alternative ministry at the Centre. All these developments presage dissolution of the Lok Sabha in October-November and a mid-term poll in February 1961. But then the ruling Congress is not in a position even to hold its own organisational elections because that would break up the party. It is unable to take any disciplinary action against Mr Biju Patnaik because that would mean the loss of Orissa for the party. Those who split the Congress-R have succeeded in splitting almost all the all-India parties but that is the dead end. Now the split wonder that the Congress R is, has been going down the slippery slope.

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# Leninism : Revamping Of Marxism ?—I

N. P. G.

**T**HERE are three interpretations of Lenin's relation to Marx, as Stalin has said. The first is that he reverted from the final form of Marx's philosophy, stated mainly in *Capital*, to its more revolutionary form contained in the early pamphlets. In itself the interpretation says nothing about Leninism.

The second interpretation is that Lenin adapted Marxism to the state of affairs in Russia. This is to deny Leninism the validity of an international proletarian philosophy and view it as a national application of Marxism. Almost all the Western critics view Leninism in this light. Not only that. Even, within the Marxist camp, there are many who unconsciously accept Leninism as such. For example, Stalin accused Zinoviev of reducing Leninism to a national application. Stalin's understanding of Leninism, in its turn, has been accused of being narrow by anti-Stalin Marxists.

The third interpretation is that Lenin brought Marx down to date, taking account of the further evolution of capitalist society and reformulating the theory and the tactics of Marxism in the light of developments of which Marx saw only the beginning. Accordingly, Leninism is regarded as Marxism in the imperialist stage of the capitalist system.

Critics of Leninism hold that by such extensions of Marxism Lenin has changed the basic concepts of Marxism. The purpose of this essay is to examine some of these charges. Before that, let us state briefly what constitutes Leninism. For our purpose, we have accepted Stalin's definition of Leninism.

Leninism is Marxism of the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution. It owes its roots to the era of imperialism and did not originate, as sought to be described by Lenin's detractors, after the imperialist war. It is international in character and

not Marxism applied in Russia. Leninism is a development of Marxism.

Stalin did not accept Zinoviev's definition of Leninism which stated: Leninism is Marxism of the era of imperialist wars and of the world revolution which began directly in a country where the peasantry dominated. Zinoviev's reference to the peasantry implies that Leninism is not an international proletarian doctrine but a product of Russian conditions.

Under the conditions of imperialism, capitalism becomes moribund because of its three contradictions: between labour and capital, between imperialist powers, between ruling nations and dependent peoples.

World War I gathered all these contradictions in one single knot and threw them on to the scales, facilitating revolutionary battles of the proletariat. Russia during the war became the focus of all these contradictions. It was the home of every kind of oppression—capitalist, colonial and militarist. Lenin called Tsarism military-feudal imperialism. It was a major reserve of Western imperialism, it provided free entry to foreign capital which controlled basic branches of the Russian economy and it supplied the Western imperialists with millions of soldiers. It became the agent of Western imperialism for squeezing wealth out of its people by way of interest on loans obtained from abroad: It became an ally of Western imperialism in the partition of Turkey, Persia, China and formed the Entente in World War I.

Whoever therefore struck against Tsarism, struck against imperialism. The situation was ideal for an attack against imperialism, in Russia, which had a most revolutionary proletariat and the proletariat had a most revolutionary ally—the peasantry.

## Leninist Method

Lenin's method was to test theo-

retical dogmas in the crucible of living practice.

Lenin exposed the character of the Second International leaders, using the same method. The Second International asserted that the proletariat cannot and ought not take power unless it constitutes a majority in the country. Russian revolutionary struggles confirmed that the stand of the Second International was an obsolete dogma because the minority but revolutionary proletariat was able to pierce the front of capitalism thanks to the favourable international and internal situation.

To take another instance. The Second International's stand was that the proletariat cannot retain power if it lacks an adequate number of trained cadres capable of organizing the administration of the country. These cadres must be trained under the conditions of capitalism and only then power can be taken. Lenin said: 'Why not first take power, create favourable conditions for development of the proletariat and then proceed to raise trained cadres? Russian experiences demonstrated that this was possible.'

Revolutionary theory is not a dogma. It assumes shape only in connection with the practical activity of a mass and revolutionary movement. The theory must answer questions raised by practice and be tested by results.

The Leninist method was again to test the policy of a party by its deeds and not by its slogans. The Second International's slogan of 'war against war' if the imperialists started a war subsequently was converted into the slogan of 'war for fatherland'.

The Leninist method was to gear party work to new revolutionary lines, to prepare the masses for the revolutionary struggle.

Self-criticism within proletarian parties is another cornerstone of the Leninist method.

### Proletarian Revolution

The theory of proletarian revolution grows out of the experience of the working class movement in all countries taken in its general aspect. The theory can give the proletarian movement the confidence, the power of orientation and an understanding of the inner relations of surrounding events.

Lenin repudiated the theory of spontaneity which is but a theory of spontaneity of the labour movement. The theory of spontaneity does not accept the role of the party of the working class. It is in favour of the movement proceeding on the line of realisable demands, of demands acceptable to capitalism. It is economism. This theory sometimes takes the form of the theory of productive forces, which explains the failure of a movement by blaming it on the level of productive forces. It just explains the failure. Kautsky proceeded along these lines. Lenin contended that the materialist theory of Marx cannot confine itself to explaining but to changing the world.

Imperialism, Lenin held, is the eve of socialist revolution because in this stage all the contradictions of imperialism become intensified. They are intensified within the capitalist countries and elements of an explosion on the internal proletarian front in the metropolises grow. They are intensified in the colonial countries and elements of an explosion against imperialism on the external colonial front also grow. Under imperialism, wars cannot be averted, and a coalition between the proletarian revolution in the West and the colonial revolution in the East becomes inevitable against the world front of imperialism.

The prerequisites for the proletarian revolution should be approached from the point of view of the world economy and not of the economic state of individual countries. The system as a whole is ripe for revolution, no matter if some countries within the system are not industrially developed. There are only two fronts: the world front of imperia-

lism and the world front of revolutionary movements.

The front of capitalism will be pierced where the chain of imperialism is the weakest. It may very well happen in less developed countries.

In 1917 Russia offered the weakest point of the chain. A great popular revolution was unfolding there with the march of the proletariat allied with the peasantry. And Tsarism, the representative of imperialism, lacked moral prestige.

In the era of imperialism, statistical estimates of the proletariat, as the doctrinaires of the Second International did, in a given country lose importance in deciding the question of proletarian revolution.

Lenin held that between the bourgeois democratic revolution of a country and the proletarian revolution, there is no Chinese Wall, separating one from the other by any interval of time.

Lenin combated the idea of permanent revolution not because he doubted the uninterruptedness of revolution but because the permanentists underestimated the role of the peasantry and the strength of the proletariat to lead the peasantry.

### Dictatorship Of The Proletariat

The fundamental question of Leninism, its point of departure, is the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of the conditions under which it can be achieved, of the conditions under which it can be consolidated. Zinoviev considered that the question of the peasantry was the fundamental question of Leninism. In that case Leninism will appear to be unsuitable for capitalistically developed countries. Stalin held that Leninism was the theory and tactics of the proletarian revolution in general and the theory and tactics of the dictatorship of the proletariat in particular.

The tasks of the proletarian revolution are: (a) to break the resistance of the landlords and capitalists who have been overthrown by the revolution; (b) to rally all working people around the proletariat for eli-

mination of classes; and (c) to organise the army of revolution for the struggle against foreign enemies, against imperialism.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is the rule of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie. It is not merely a conquest of power but a new State with new organs of power. It does not grow up on the bourgeois order but grows out of the ashes of the bourgeois set up. The State is an instrument in the hands of the ruling class to suppress class enemies. The dictatorship of the proletariat differs from the dictatorship of any other class in that it is the dictatorship of the exploited majority over the exploiting minority.

The dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be a complete democracy. It is totally against the bourgeoisie, it restricts the exploiting minority. It can arise only by force and not by peaceful development of bourgeois democracy. Marx's qualifying phrase that Europe might develop peacefully into proletarian democracy was due to the fact that Marx did not live to see the development of capitalism into imperialism. Lenin, however, held that if the proletariat is victorious in the principal capitalist countries and the present capitalist encirclement is replaced by socialist encirclement, peaceful development of proletarian democracy might be possible.

### The Peasant Question

The peasant question if not the fundamental question of Leninism, is a very important one because it is the question of the ally of the proletariat. The Second Internationalists ignored the peasantry. The Socialist Revolutionaries ignored the proletariat. Lenin believed that the peasantry is used by the capitalists as their reserve; if the revolutionary potentialities of the peasantry are not exhausted, this reserve must be transformed into the reserve of the proletariat.

Lenin found in Russian history an illustration of this transformation. The Russian peasantry during the bourgeois democratic revolution, i.e. from the 1905 revolution to the 1917

February revolution, was emancipated from the influence of the bourgeoisie. It deserted the Cadets, understood the futility of the Dumas and turned towards the Bolshevik party.

The bourgeois revolutions in Britain, France, Germany or Austria did not however make the peasantry turn towards the proletariat because these were not led by the proletariat. The peasantry was freed there from the feudal influence and brought under bourgeois influence.

During the proletarian revolution in Russia (February 1917—October 1917) the peasantry was delivered from the influence of the Mensheviks and the SRs who wanted to fight the war that impoverished the peasantry.

After the consolidation of Soviet power, the industry was strengthened and linked up with the peasant economy.

### The National Question

The national question is a part of the proletarian question. If the revolutionary potentials of a national liberation movement are present, they must be developed for the sake of the proletarian question.

The Second Internationalists viewed this issue in part, limiting themselves within civilized countries, limiting the right of self-determination to cultural autonomy, leaving political power to imperialism, viewing it as a juridical question, leaving aside the question of imperialist exploitation.

Leninism breaks the issue into the following parts: The world is divided into the camp of imperialists and the camp of exploited colonies. The colonies are the reserve of imperialism. Revolutionary struggle of the colonies is the only way of emancipation. On the other hand, the national liberation movements in colonies lead to crisis of imperialism. To deepen the crisis of imperialism, proletarian movements in developed countries must be linked with colonial liberation movements and a common revolutionary front is to be raised.

The colonies have a right to secede and to unite voluntarily. But the national liberation movement must

fight against narrow-mindedness, isolation and aloofness. The secessions or unions are only roads to international proletarian movement.

### The Party

In pre-revolutionary struggle the party is a parliamentary party. In revolutionary times, it has to be a revolutionary party, a Leninist party.

The Leninist party is the advanced detachment of the working class. It remains till the working class as a whole rises to the level of the advanced detachment. Under capitalism, the whole mass cannot rise to the level of the advanced detachment and therefore any sympathiser, without being a member of a proletarian organisation cannot be a member of the party. The party however is closely bound up with the working class by all the fibres of its being. It enjoys moral and political credit among the non-party masses.

The party is not only the advanced detachment but the most organised too, so that it can fight capitalism. The proletariat has many organizations: trade unions, cooperatives, factory organisations, parliamentary groups, Press, cultural and educational organizations, youth leagues and so on. The party is the highest form of these organizations. It is the sum-total and a system of its organizations.

The multiplicity of proletarian organizations does not lead to divergence in leadership because all of them serve one class. The general direction is given by the party. The organizations are not subordinate to the party but influenced by the party which contains the advanced detachment.

The party is the embodiment of the will and unity of action. Factionalism, dear to the Second Internationalists, means many centres of leadership and is incompatible with the party. That the principle of the minority submitting to the majority can give rise to formalism and bureaucracy is an illusion. The formations in the party owe themselves to the will and consent of the members. It was aristocratic anarchism and Russian nihilism to imagine that

party means bureaucracy. The relations between the members of the party, between the party and the class, between the party and the mass are of mutual confidence.

When a party takes a decision, is it required that every member of the mass must be convinced of the decision? No. The support or benevolent neutralism of the mass must be enjoined by prolonged revolutionary work and then the minority may be coerced.

The party is the instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat, for achieving it when it is not achieved, to consolidate it when it is achieved. The party withers when classes disappear.

The dictatorship of the party is not however the dictatorship of the proletariat. The latter is wider and richer in scope; it is only led by the former. The party is a part of the class, it is not the class. It governs through soviets and not separately from the soviets. The dictatorship of the proletariat is a State concept and based on force. The party which leads the proletariat cannot be based on force.

(To be concluded)

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## Events In Cambodia—II

SUBROTO SEN

IN the early days of the Cambodian struggle for independence King Norodom Sihanouk was full of enthusiasm for the Free World and talked a lot about "our common fight against communism". But from the moment he let it be known (this was another instance when he showed himself much more intelligent than the rulers of neighbouring South Vietnam and Thailand), that he would fight communism only within his country but would not join the holy crusade against communism as demanded by John Foster Dulles, the relations with the USA began to cool off. Immediately after this attitude was expressed by Sihanouk in September 1953 American Senator Knowland and the American Ambassador in Saigon, Mr Heath, rushed to Phnom Penh to "persuade" Cambodia off this disastrous road. One should not await the danger, the Americans said, but go out to meet it by attacking "communists and Vietminh". Sihanouk apparently was not convinced. And ever since the Americans have spared no effort—from subtle manoeuvres to the crudest form of pressure, including CIA plots, to overthrow him—to make Cambodia join the imperialist bandwagon in Asia and in the process had forced Sihanouk to take up an anti-American position. Crude American manoeuvres not only hurt the feelings of the highly sensitive monarch but threatened his rule as well. To ally himself with the anti-communist crusade in Asia, he understood quite well, would only bring upon him the hostility of all the progressive forces within Cambodia and outside and seriously weaken the base of his rule.

The history of American policy towards Cambodia has been a sordid one and just a few instances of American action would suffice to show why in spite of his anti-communist position Sihanouk was forced to pursue an anti-imperialist foreign policy.

In one of its most curious manoeuvres the CIA tried to influence Sihanouk during his trip to Manila (February, 1956) to deliver a pro-SEATO speech. Sihanouk's reaction was to affirm his faith in neutrality and expose the whole affair to the public. Upon his return from Peking late in February Sihanouk faced a direct threat to his rule in the form of economic blockade imposed by the American puppets of Thailand and South Vietnam who started military provocations also along the Cambodian frontiers. At this critical juncture the U.S. made it clear that Cambodia would not be allowed to use American weapons against Thai and South Vietnamese aggressors. Promised American economic aid too was withheld. To add insult to injury the intolerably arrogant American Ambassador McClintock throughout the crisis behaved like a viceroy. A bitter Sihanouk said, "the Americans who have so often promised to defend the liberties of small countries have just shown their real face in Cambodia. It is not edifying! Let my compatriots be assured however. We will not retreat a single step. We have victoriously rebuffed threats of this sort before."

The American campaign of intimidation of Cambodia had just the opposite effect—the policy of neutrality was strengthened and made much more consistent. Despite her neutralist proclamations, however, till then Cambodia had no diplomatic relations with socialist countries. The National Congress which was called by Sihanouk in April 1956 to discuss the country's relations with the U.S. and particularly the question of foreign aid, decided that Cambodia should receive unconditional aid from socialist countries even if it brought about a strong American reaction. Cambodia now set about establishing diplomatic and trade re-

lations with the socialist bloc and receive aid from its members. Cambodia's formal recognition of China (July 1958) was the last straw for the Pentagon which was getting exasperated by Sihanouk's growing independence in foreign policy. The Cambodian move was followed by hostile actions by Diem's troops along the South Vietnamese border. And Sihanouk was not late in identifying the power whom he called the "unseen conductor of the orchestra". A much more serious threat, however, came from the "Bangkok Plan" outlined by SEATO and formally approved by Eisenhower. After the plot was unearthed in January 1954, it was seen that the Plan, in its maximum form, called for violent replacement of the Phnom Penh government and, in its minimum form, for dismemberment of Cambodia and ultimate civil war through the establishment of a "Free Cambodia" government that would take in several western provinces bordering Thailand and several eastern provinces bordering Diem's Republic of Vietnam. Thanks to intelligence supplied by General de Gaulle the plot was crushed by Sihanouk in the nick of time. General Dap Chuon, principal Cambodian actor in the plot, was killed, his South Vietnamese collaborators were arrested and a huge quantity of American weapons and equipment was hauled up. Although discredited, the Pentagon yet continued its sabotage operation and to help the Thailand-based 'Khmer Serei' forces under Son Ngoc Thanh dedicated towards the overthrow of Sihanouk and establishment of a Diem-type regime. In September 1964 the Cambodian government unearthed another American plot to assassinate Prince Sihanouk, disrupt the country from within, and attack at the same time from without by forces from South Vietnam and Thailand. Against this background of perfidious American behaviour it is not difficult to understand Prince Sihanouk's bitterness when he wrote in April 1965 that "till my last breath I will never forget all these injustices, this contempt, these denigrations, these base calu-

mnie... The United States and the West will remain for me to the end of my life the symbol of injustice, inequality and discrimination."

#### Nature of U.S. Aid

Thus while experience opened Sihanouk's eyes to the aggressive nature of U.S. imperialism he also became growingly aware of the pernicious nature of American aid which Cambodia had been receiving since 1955. Sihanouk realized how 'aid' was used to blackmail him into taking sides with U.S. imperialism and how it subverted his economy and regime. As Han Suyin noted, "In spite of some practical benefits, there was also a steadily growing dislocation of the economy of the country, directly due to the effects of aid. One may term them side effects, since they are not what aid is supposed to promote, but it appears that in this case the side effects of aid are more pernicious and destructive than any benefits the avowed intentions of aid may bring." Sihanouk himself pointed out at the time of rejecting American aid (November, 1963) that "the principal and fundamental error of aid is that it is the deliberate and relentless means of a policy which aims at the creation of not an independent and prosperous country, but a small and corrupt capitalist class, in the pay of a foreign power, holding the economy of a country in its stranglehold, and maintaining the country as dependent."

Sihanouk obviously travelled a long way from his early days of high regard for the "great democratic nation of the United States." He could now see through the real nature of U.S. imperialism. But the fact that his realisation about U.S. imperialism was not fully matched by proper anti-imperialist measures was due largely to his class background. Breaking off diplomatic relations with the U.S. or rejection of American aid were undoubtedly brave measures, an index of his genuinely independent and anti-imperialist stand. But he failed to understand that his own courage was no substitute for the re-

solute anti-imperialist sentiment of his people free of exploitation and social injustice, that the surest guarantee against imperialism is a politically aroused free people. Sihanouk's class position, his anxiety to maintain his own rule prevented him from taking similarly bold measures against the exploiters and reactionaries who acted as the Trojan horse of U.S. imperialism inside the country. Rather he had a lurking hope that his anti-communist policy at home (as he said, "I remain the only barrier that checks the march of communism toward a *total and rapid success*.") would ultimately shield him from the wrath of imperialism.

At this point it is necessary to take a closer look at his internal policy and particularly his attitude toward communism. To Sihanouk communism was an alien ideology unsuitable for the Buddhist and traditionally royalist peasants of Cambodia. The concept of class struggle was called "nonsense"! The Cambodian communists were accused of "playing the game of the Vietminh and communist-bloc imperialism". Militant members of the Communist Party called Pracheachon (People's Party) who tried to organize the poor peasants and workers on rubber plantations were gaoled. However, as a sop to the left-wing in general he included some moderately left people in his administration and pursued a policy designed to minimize class tension. While he would brook no communist opposition to his rule he also took care to prevent the emergence of a big capitalist class strong enough to challenge his personal rule. This concern about the growth of a big business closely allied with imperialism together with shortage of capital necessary to build the industrial base led him to develop a state sector and nationalize the country's banking and foreign trade. But he failed to see that when the administration as a whole was run by propertied bureaucrats and vested interests, nationalization would to some extent disguise exploitation but could not eliminate it. Neither could he prevent simply

by his goodwill the anti-people army from oppressing the peasants and progressive forces. Gradually, of course, he came to realise the corrupt and oppressive nature of his officials and the army and occasionally broke into bitter denunciation. "I have asked the government and our military and civilian authorities not to inform me any more about the subversive activities of the communists because in recent days certain members of the government have come to frighten me by saying that the reds are attempting to overthrow the throne and are now stepping up their activities in our country. Concerning these I want to tell these gentlemen that only the wives of high officials and high personalities are afraid of the communists because they are heavily laden with gold and diamonds and have amassed large fortunes, and their children have become hooligans and loafers enjoying a life of pleasure and luxury. It is they not in the least afraid of communists." As for me, Norodom Sihanouk, I am not in the least afraid of communists."

In a moment of bitterness about the growing discontent against his army and bureaucrats he said, "I have always said that our country will advance more rapidly in the path of progress and social justice if all our people will accept a communist regime. I have blue blood in my veins and due to this fact I have to a certain extent the attitude and reactions of a bourgeois but my conscience never dictates a feeling of hostility or terror toward communism." (Nov. 3, 1966). A long way indeed from his earlier pathological fear of communism.

(To be concluded)

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S. P. CHATTERJEE

Statesman Office

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Durgapur-4

# Frankly Speaking

SANJOY

AS one grows older, one begins to lose interest in professional reporters' of revolution. Much of their reporting is repetitive and their unquestioning, boundless faith seems unreal, the more so when one thinks of the melancholy waste of hopes overthrown in the land of the October Revolution. Perhaps one has got to be a scholarly party member to keep up reasoned faith? But even scholarship is at a discount these days. People are, for understandable reasons, in a great hurry everywhere to go somewhere. We may think of the Long March, of a protracted struggle, but all the same we want quick results. Books are time-consuming.

Anna Louise Strong was at one time a magic name. But then many people ceased to take interest. The great split is one reason. The last time interest revived in her, among a limited circle in Calcutta in a limited negative way, was when a strident Bengali weekly reproduced one of her Letters from China in translation. The English text, a strong criticism of the 'revisionist' leadership of the South Vietnamese NLF, sounded strange, and the Bengali weekly was requested by some people not to carry it. But it did appear. Soon the Letter was found to be a forgery. In a few weeks the ripple died down.

But what a woman Anna Louise Strong was! As she herself says, she had known in her lifetime three civilisations—the American, the Russian, the Chinese. Born in the USA in 1885, she carried on as a social worker in Seattle and felt that she and her friends were improving American democracy. Seattle was a "progressive city": in any hard-fought election, the people always beat the monopolies from New York. But whatever was gained in the struggle for "people's ownership", e.g. of private street-car lines, or of electric supply, the profits of the big private enterprises increased. Never mind. The faith in "inevitable progress" re-

mained the deepest faith in the American democracy of her youth.

Nothing, she says, in her whole life so shook the foundations of her soul as when America joined the imperialist war in 1917. But though the First World War broke for her, and for many American progressives, the faith in their peaceful, democratic uniqueness, they had their recompense: they also became "joint heirs of the world revolution". After the failure of the Seattle general strike and the resulting demoralisation, Anna Louise Strong went to Moscow, first for the American Friends' Service; then the Seattle Labour Council sent her a credential as observer to the Red Trade Union International Congress in 1922. Finally, she made her home in Moscow for nearly thirty years, ceaselessly writing about the Russian Revolution and its aftermath. She also organised food relief during the Volga famine and a farm colony for homeless children on the Volga. She married a Russian communist, who was an editor and writer. He died in the Urals in the Second World War.

Every year or two she went on lecture tour in America. At these times she visited other revolutions on the way, in Germany, Mexico, Spain and China. She first saw China in late 1925, then again in 1927, years of hope and rank despair for the communists. When the government in Wuhan ceased to be revolutionary and began suppressing workers and peasants, she travelled to Moscow with Borodin. It was after ten years, in 1937, that she went to China again and visited Chu Teh at the headquarters of the famous 8th Route Army, where the communists were working out the strategy and tactics today described as "people's war". The next visit was in 1940 when KMT generals, supposed to be fighting the Japanese, were attacking communist-led troops. Some time after the defeat of Japan, in 1946 she saw how things were being organised against the communists in the period when General Marshall was acting as the truce maker. She made an extensive tour of the liberated

areas. She met Mao and others.

Let us quote her: "When I left Yen-an (in early 1947), I knew that China, under the Chinese communists, was what I wanted for the rest of my life. For this there were many reasons... Basically it was because in the discussions in Yen-an I felt my own mind expanding and realized that in recent years I had felt it contracting in Moscow into rigid forms. I said: Russians are concentrating now on building Great Russia, but Russia is not my country. The Chinese still think in terms of the world revolution where I belong. For the world includes and transcends my country".

She started back to China in September 1948 with the thought that this might be permanent. It took her ten years on the way. At first she had to wait five months in Moscow for an exit permit into Manchuria. After that the Russians arrested her as a "spy" and sent her back through Poland. For six years thereafter "no communists anywhere in the world would speak to me." When Moscow exonerated her in 1955 she renewed contact with China and was invited there; she had to fight a three-year battle with the U.S. State Department for a passport. In August 1958 she reached Peking and made it her home, the third in her long life.

She died there a few days ago, at the age of 84, after an authorship of more than 30 books and countless articles, after a life of unique experience and unwavering conviction that the interests of all the peoples lie in fighting together against imperialism. Her grave was a mass of flowers sent by the Chinese leaders and the people.

## Another Woman

Another woman, again, occupied some newspaper space last week. Svetlana Aliluyeva has married an American and feels she is just 17. Her journey was the other way round, from the land of the October Revolution to the USA, the most ravenous imperialist power the world has yet seen, where she has acquired a touch-

ing faith in American democracy. Dickens knew better, even 128 years ago. During a six-month visit to the States in 1842, he wrote to one of his friends (the letter was discovered recently and is part of an exhibition to commemorate the centenary of his death on June 9, 1970): "See what is passing now. Look at the exhausted Treasury, the paralysed Government. The stabbings and shootings, the coarse and brutal threat-enings exchanged between senators under the very senate's roof, the intrusion of the most pitiful, mean, malicious, creeping, crawling, sneaking party spirit into all transactions of life...the silly, drivelling, slanderous, wicked, monstrous party press." Dickens said he believed "the heaviest

blow ever dealt at liberty's head will be dealt by this nation in its ultimate failure of its example to the earth."

As for Russia today, a Stalin prize winner, Monica Felton, who died in Madras last month, exclaimed when she met an Indian writer going to Moscow for a few years in 1956—"Are you mad?" The same chap was told by P. C. Joshi that he might start writing poetry again if he went to China, not Moscow. What a life!

P.S. Soul in bliss etc. ('Frankly Speaking', April 11). The quotation is: *Thou art a soul in bliss, but I am bound!/Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears/Do scald like molten lead.* That is, the tears scald, not the wheel of fire, but the man.

## Computerization And The Indian Railways

KAMRUPEE

THE late night AIR news bulletin of March 7 had two bits of news, following one another. First, it was Mr Nanda trying to allay fears that the computerization programme on the Indian Railways would in any way affect employment opportunities; close on his heels came Dr V. K. R. V. Rao, who while speaking to the All India Convention on Instrumentation and Automation, spoke of the need to proceed slowly and cautiously on the path of computerization. It is not strange that two Union Cabinet Ministers themselves should apparently contradict each other; nor is it strange that the government-controlled AIR should broadcast such conflicting views in such a manner as to highlight the contradiction. It all only goes to show how even at the highest policy-making levels, there seems to be little understanding of the full implications of computerization in our context, under our present political-economic system.

The opposition to automation and computerization from the organized section of the working class in our

country is strong, strident; and justly so. For the working class sees in the computer an immediate enemy, a threat to jobs. All 'conceptual' discussions on automation and the problems of industrial societies, while no doubt very illuminating, are not as real and immediate as the prospect of a hundred out of a hundred and twenty people being laid off in an industrial unit. And often, those whose services are considered dispensable are among the lowest paid staff. But one way in which this threat to job security among the low-paid workers is sought to be allayed is by the assurance given by the authorities that the introduction of a computer will not result in job-retrenchment. This at best is a specious argument, for jobs are not static things; people not merely have jobs, but grow old and retire, die; and they are to be continuously replaced. And no amount of clever public relations work has been able to assure continuous employment at present levels, and further growth of employment opportunities, with the introduction of computers. Such an ingenious

explanation is beyond the capacities of even the smart PR boys. The facts, as made repeatedly clear in a multitude of pamphlets, articles and by the various trade union workers, are too real to be wished away. And yet, in the very justified campaign against automation launched by the trade unions, there seems to be a lack of total understanding of the rationale of the enemy. There are also other aspects of computerization, quite as important as the prospect of unemployment, which need to be understood.

In this article, an attempt is being made to study the significance of computerization on the Indian Railways—incidentally a process which seems to be well on its way towards completion in spite of vigorous opposition from the unions and examine the rationalizations offered by the Railway authorities in defence of their measures. There is sufficient literature highlighting the threat the computer holds to future job-seekers; here, the emphasis is going to be on the efficacy of the computer. After all, the supreme efficiency, the capacity for almost infinite work of the computer—these are the 'virtues' of the computer which are supposed to make it a desirable acquisition even though it might create other problems. We will show how even from a narrow point of view of sheer efficiency, the computer is not so formidable as it is made out; or rather, at our present technological level, how the computer is merely going to be an expensive showpiece, how it is just not possible for us to make the full use of such an expensive technological device.

### Which One?

"Do you have a computer? Which one—IBM or ICT, or the Third Generation 360?" These are questions that are being asked between the officers of the various Zonal Railways and the Railway Production Units these days. Actually, there is not much of a choice, for all over the Indian Railways, the computer that is being installed is the

APRIL 18, 1970

IBM 1401, even though, if the Railways are only 'experimenting' with available models, they could have gone in for the British ICT, or even waited for Our Own Computers, scheduled to be available in 1972, manufactured by Bharat Electronics; but that, is another story, involving link-ups between the IBM and those responsible for the computer-fever among our policy-makers, into which we need not go at present. Anyway, the fact is that with the installation of an IBM 1401 computer on the N.F. Railway a couple of months ago, the massive computerization programme launched by the Indian Railways now covers the Railway Board's office, all Zonal Railways and the Production Units. This mechanisation of the manual operations performed by large groups of clerical staff has naturally made the railway employees and the educated unemployed apprehensive of the long-term defects of computerization. And the strange thing is that the Railway authorities, who normally never let go an opportunity to publicise their 'progressive' measures, are curiously shy even of letting the public know that they have acquired computers; the latest installation, for instance, was completed under the strictest secrecy.

Is computerization of the system of work on the Railways really necessary at this stage? Do we have the economic infrastructure to develop computer applications on the lines in which it has been done on American, Japanese and European railway systems? How much does it cost each Zonal Railway system in India to instal and work the computer? What are the applications planned to be programmed on the computers and how will this contribute to better efficiency and to the economising of working expenses? How many staff will be rendered surplus and what are the plans to absorb them in alternative jobs? These are some of the important questions which require to be examined.

#### Cost of Computers

First, the cost of the computer.

The Indian Railways have installed everywhere the IBM 1401 computer units. Each of these units, if bought outright, would cost Rs 28 lakhs, or Rs 3.64 crores for the Indian Railway system as a whole (i.e., nine Zonal Railways, three production units and the office of the Railway Board). As there is going to be continuous change and development of the computers, and older models become obsolete within four or five years, the Indian Railways have decided to hire these machines from the IBM instead of buying them outright. (Incidentally, the models hired by the Railways are already out of date in the West and Japan.) The Railways are supposed to have the option of a more sophisticated model, when it is available for us (when it is out of date in the West). The rental charge for each unit is about Rs 48,000 a month or about Rs 576,000 a year. In addition, the Railways will have to pay hire charges of Rs 240,000 a year for the allied Unit Recording machines, namely, Punchers, Verifiers and sorting machines. So, the annual rental charges on each Railway zone and production unit would be about Rs 816,000 or about Rs 9,100,000 for the Indian Railways as a whole. In addition, the Railways will have to spend about Rs 30,000 per annum for each Unit (multiply it by 13, for the figure for the whole Railways) to purchase continuous stationery (the stationery too, a monopoly of the IBM) like punch cards etc. All together, on the computer applications, the Indian Railways will have to spend approximately one crore of rupees per annum. And this is not all; as a bonus, before the computers are installed, the arrangements required for installation of each unit by way of air-conditioning, interior furnishings, finishes for keeping the area dust-free etc. would cost between Rs 200,000 and Rs 300,000 (again multiply by 13 for the total costs involved).

Since the Indian Railways will be spending annually about Rs 1 crore by way of rental charges alone, the

question that naturally arises is whether they would be able to economise the working expenses at least to that extent, as otherwise it would be unjustified even from conservative financial premises to have a programme of computerization. As the applications intended to be put on the computer are repetitive clerical operations, economy in working expenses can be achieved only if the staff cost is reduced commensurate with the expenditure incurred in the installation and working of the computers. This is elementary book-keeping, and no amount of 'assurances' will alter simple arithmetical facts. Most of the clerical staff who do these operations are at present working in scales of Rs 110-180 and Rs 130-300 p.m., and we can assume the mean pay of those whom the computer has to render surplus to be about Rs 200 p.m. On this basis, it would be necessary to reduce the staff strength by approximately four thousand over the Indian Railway system as a whole in order to achieve a corresponding reduction in the working expenditure. The clerical staff in the Railway Production Units and the Railway Board's office is not large; so the bulk of the retrenchments will be in the Zonal Railway systems, to the extent of about 400 in each zone. But the Railways have given certain 'assurances' to the Federations of Labour that (a) there will be no retrenchment as a result of computerization, (b) the promotion prospects of the existing staff will not be affected as the higher-grade posts as on a particular date in 1966 would continue to be maintained, and (c) the staff rendered surplus will not be transferred from one place to another in the course of their re-deployment in alternative posts. If these 'assurances' are kept, it follows that there would be no immediate reduction of staff; but it also means that the extra expenditure incurred by computerization cannot be compensated immediately. (The way future recruitment will be affected in another matter).

What are the kinds of work a com-

puter is expected do on the Indian Railways? It was an Accounts Officer of the Indian Railways who after an extensive study tour abroad for about a year suggested the mechanization of work through IBM unit recording machines and the computers. His outlook was naturally oriented towards mechanisation of the accounting work primarily, with the result that unlike the more advanced railway systems where the computer is used as an aid to taking quick decisions, here it is used only for reducing the clerical labour, a kind of labour which is in abundant supply in our country. The uses to which a computer is put in some of the advanced railway systems of the U.S., Japan and Western Europe are as follows :

plying information on the location and movement of wagons of the customers, data for carrying out schedules of repairs for track maintenance and locomotives and other rolling stock.

It is only after these applications had been put on the computer, and when it was found that the computers still had certain idle time, that manual clerical operations were put on the computer; and this was mainly due to the fact that these countries have shortage of labour. What we lack at the present juncture is that economic and technological infrastructure which is necessary to make the fullest possible use of a computer. To acquire such a level of technological sophistication

would cost hundreds of crores of rupees. For instance, the total expenditure incurred by the Southern Pacific Railway in the USA, when the computer network was installed for all the operations mentioned above, was about 30 million dollars. It would be necessary to have a micro-wave Telex network with all the Railway stations, yards, workshops etc. to enable data on movement of trains, wagons, reservations, repair schedules etc. to be fed on to the main computer centre and this would cost an enormous amount of money which we can ill afford at the present stage of our economy. Actually, the money is just not there. Moreover, even if we know that a particular wagon is detained at a particular point, we can usefully utilise

S.N.C.F.  
(French National)

Civil Engineering Calculations

Track Planning Studies

Calculations of potential speeds of trains, taking account of routing limitations, and signalling

Time table calculations

Wagon routing, length of overlays, daily distribution of empty stock

S.S.R.  
(Swedish State)

Wagon lists, containing information about origin, destination, type, weight of wagon, freight

S.P.R.  
(Southern Pacific)

Maintaining each train's performance, engineering calculations,

Seat reservations

Customer information on movement of wagons

J.N.R.  
(Japanese National)  
Same as S.P.R.

(From *International Railway Journal* Dec. 1969.)

Thus, in the American and Japanese Railway systems, the computer is used as an aid to taking quick executive decisions; but for us, such an expensive instrument is used to reduce clerical labour. They use it to control work on the movement of trains, marshalling of wagons, reservation for long-distance passengers over different connecting routes, sup-

plying information on the location and movement of wagons of the customers, data for carrying out schedules of repairs for track maintenance and locomotives and other rolling stock.

**Hardly Any Progress**

Assuming that it is desirable for the Railways alone to acquire this 'infrastructure', such an endeavour

is much more expensive than hiring a computer, and anyway, one can't change one's society by hiring IBM to do it (whatever our bureaucrats might think). that information to satisfy the customer only if we have the allied facilities to move the wagons quickly to whatever point as required by the customer. At present, the Railway Board's computer is connected by Telex service with certain selected marshalling yards in the country and the data are made available every day on the detention of wagons in

the yards and their movements. But even though this information is daily available, there has been hardly any progress in the wagon turnround and the customers continue to complain of inordinate delays as well as of misdespatch of wagons. So much for the 'use' made of the computer to help the commercial customer.

What about the uses to which the computer may be put, within the Railways? At present, the applications put on the computer are, (a) Traffic accounting work, and (b) Linking of coal wagons. The traffic accounting work consists of compilation of commodity-wise statistics of originating traffic between each pair of stations, compilation of the earnings and their apportionment between the different Zonal Railway systems. Formerly, this work was done by people. The result was that the commodity statistics and the apportionment of earnings, say for the month of January, used to be available by the second following month, namely March. Today, with computerization, this information is available by the first following month, that is, by the 11th or 12th of February. But does this availability of data a month earlier really help the Railways' efficiency? We do not think it does, for the commodity statistics are rarely made use of for a proper analysis of the trends of traffic to assess the increase or the fall and take remedial measures. One of the major criticisms of the Indian Railways system (and this criticism could apply to our whole system of government) is that while they compile a maze of statistics and even print them every month, the managerial personnel hardly make any purposeful study and use of these statistics. But there is another problem as well. To make a proper assessment of these figures on the computer, the statistics should come in an even flow; this is rarely the case and so the computer will have to remain idle for the major portion of the month.

The second operation involves the

linking of what is called the wagon dispatch statement of coal dispatched by the collieries with the shed returns sent by the different loco sheds regarding the arrival of these wagons and to determine the number of missing wagons. As the collieries are paid immediately on proof of dispatch of the wagons, this linking does not in any way hasten the process of payment. The purpose is only to assess the number of missing wagons and the wagon numbers in order to enable the Claims Organization to trace these wagons. It is an interesting commentary on the 'efficiency' of the computer that when this work was done manually, the percentage of missing wagons varied between 11 and 18 per cent of the total transaction every month, while now, with computerization, the percentage is as high as 60 to 80 per cent per month. No attempts have been made to trace these missing wagons by the Claims Organization of the Railways; the clerical staff are (naturally) reluctant to decode the statements issued from the computer room, with the result that even the efficiency in tracing the missing wagons or in settling the claims on these wagons has gone down.

#### Further Uses

The Railways are also planning to computerise the preparation of pay rolls, provident fund accounting, operating statistics and inventory control in the stores. First, computerization of pay rolls. On the Indian Railways, we have about 60 different scales of pay depending upon different categories, and the number of columns that will have to be printed on a computer showing the details of pay, deductions, recoveries, advances, leave accounts, provident fund accounts, loans would be about eighty. The complexity of scales, the different dates of annual increments, the different types of loans and advances given, the recoveries thereof—all these make the process of feeding the basic data to the computer every month a highly complicated task. The Northern and the Central Railways have during the last eight months suc-

ceeded only in putting the pay rolls of about 1,000 of their staff on the computer. Each of these Railways have a staff strength of about a lakh and twenty thousand, and the assessment now made is that it may take them anything between three and four years to computerise the pay roll of the entire staff strength. Under the Payment of Wages Act, salaries are to be paid within 10 days of the end of the wage period, and this is being done even now, with only people preparing the bills. The computer will not quicken the process; on the contrary, if the clerical staff show any resistance to the computer and feed deliberately the wrong kind of data to the computer (and nobody can blame them for doing so), the results would be lovely to watch. Incidentally, one of the rationalisations offered in defence of computerization of the pay rolls is that as a consequence, each employee will receive a fully documented pay-slip, having all the details about his emoluments and deductions. Apart from the fact that this will be available on only a few of the 80 or so columns printed, and it would be a job even to locate the figures, what information is available is going to be in English; and about 40% of the Railway staff are illiterate in English. Or are the Railway authorities thinking of going for computers in the regional languages?

The operating statistics are at present compiled manually based on basic documents such as engine tickets and guards' journals. These indicate the time spent by the different sets of crew, fuel consumption every day, periods of journey, etc. and they in turn enable compilation of fuel statistics, engine kilometres, tonne kilometres and also in assessing the mileage, overtime allowance etc. to be given to the crew. The switch-over to computerization here also will enable the information to be made available about a month in advance; but this also involves that the basic data are given correctly by the engine crew and guard.

The system of inventory control is

to enable the administration to assess the stocking of different items of stores in the different stores depots and also for planning their future procurement or disposal of surplus stock. It is no use knowing that a particular material is in short supply at a particular point, if the material cannot be procured immediately. Unlike the American Railway system, we suffer from certain inherent handicaps in the procurement of stores which result in considerable delay, both procedural and in transit time, in getting the stores. The differences are, mainly:

(a) In the American railway system, they do not have such an involved system of tenders resulting in the procedure of finalisation of the tender itself taking about three months. Most of the supplies are made from recognized trade concerns where the average time taken to quote is about three days and the supply is from sources within a radius of about 100 miles. The time taken for the actual supply of orders is about seven days after the orders are placed. On the Indian Railways, the average time taken for supply of stores from the time tenders are invited to the actual delivery is between six months and one year. As long as these delays continue and the existing procedure is not changed, or sufficiently large markets all over the country are not grown, even an immediate supply of information from the computer on the deficiencies in stock will not help in speeding up the procurement.

(b) Because of the inherent delay in the procurement of stores, there is a tendency to over-stock and the over-stock results in wastage, particularly in few Construction Organizations. For instance, on the N.F. Railway, after the Survey and Construction and the Broad Gauge Construction Organization were wound up, it was found that the surplus stores lying were to the extent of Rs 1½ crores. Most of the material become obsolete quickly and this results in delay or even total inability to dispose them of. In fact, one of the major reasons for over-capitalization of

assets on the Indian Railways is this practice of overstocking.

A computer, if it has to be effective, has to help in such top management decisions; but to employ it to save labour at lower levels of working is entirely unjustified. Undoubtedly, an element of snobbery has gone into the decisions towards installation of the computer; and the fact that its use was effectively canvassed by an accounts officer has made the computer 'accounts-oriented', and most of the technical departments which should be vitally concerned with planning of their operations on the computer, particularly the Operating and the Commercial departments, have shown little interest. This, of course, has not prevented a large number of their officers going abroad to study the working of different extremely advanced railway systems where computers are fully utilised; their reluctance to introduce computers in working these operations is probably due to their well-merited fears that the computer would highlight their own inefficiency.

A plea often made in defence of computerization is that it will give rise to a host of subsidiary industries (like manufacture of transistors, cables, wiring equipment, panels for computers etc.) But as it is, the plant for manufacture of these are being located at three places in the country (Faridabad, Bombay, Bangalore) and whatever little employment opportunities are thrown open now are going to be available in only a few select areas; the threat of increase of mass unemployment all over the country still remains a vital one.

Against this background, the question that naturally arises is whether it is worth while at this stage of development of the Indian Railways (and by implication, of our country under the present system) to instal computers, or whether the efficiency would not improve by a more intensive utilization of the existing assets, among which the most valuable is our manpower. Modernisation of working of only select operations in isolation (without a revolutionary modernisa-

tion of our whole society) will only result in a kind of snobbish satisfaction that we too have a computer. (Incidentally, a thoroughly Indian attitude).

We are in no way backward; we too have computers. Basically, such is the motivation of the Railways; and this is borne out by the fact that even at present, the computers are not fully utilised in the sense that no Railway works it for three shifts, while the private organizations who have their own computers ensure that they work for three shifts to get the maximum output. But for the Railways, it seems to be more an expensive showpiece, acquired without much thought given to its need, cost, utility, effectiveness.

## The Press

### Many Voices

P. C. D.

LAST week, speculation over the break-up in the Kremlin, once the citadel of world revolution, now the gendarme of the status quo, once the object of admiration, now of jokes, provided a cheerful distraction for newspapers from the feeling of listlessness about a dying administration at home. Is the present troika of Brezhnev, Podgorny and Kosygin living in a twilight world of political suspects? 'Not without fire' is the smoke in the Kremlin, remarked *The Statesman*. Dissensions at the top, according to the *Hindu*, arose out of the poor performance of the economy, 80 per cent of which is working under the new system of economic stimulation laying stress on profit and productivity. Or do the divergences between the troika and the Suslov-Shelepin group reflect the vested interests of the competitive groups—the party bureaucracy, the technocrat classes, the army? To a common man the Soviet Establishment in common exudes the same smugness as its American equivalent about its material progress.

Internationally, Cambodia continues to cause anxiety—the less the American involvement, the better. If the International Control Commission (the reactivation of which India is trying without any promise of success, according to the *Patrika*) helps in restraining alien forces from operating on Cambodian soil it will have at least earned its keep—wrote *The Statesman* after admitting that earlier reports exaggerated Vietcong involvement. The *Hindustan Times* warned that the military advisers of SEATO meeting in Manila should check the 'dangerous temptation' and added that, as long as external powers kept away there was a hope that a proposal such as emanated from France could finally succeed in evolving a common international approach to a problem which was essentially political and not military.

The murder of the West German Ambassador, Count Karl Von Spreti, in Guatemala was the immediate concern of our newspapers. All of them were exercised over the gradual erosion of the sanctity of a diplomat in a foreign country—kidnapping and then murder. 'Radical killers', to quote *The Statesman* epithet, however attracted odium out of all proportion. True, it was a terrorist strategy designed to humiliate the ruling party and extract the maximum advantage but comprehensible when one remembers the 30,000 killings and executions in such a tiny patch of land at the hands of Colonel Arana who argued that it was necessary to eliminate violence and communism before thinking about social and economic development.

Nationally, the confrontation between the Supreme Court and Parliament over the summonses issued to five MPs came in for press comments. It was 'unnecessary and undesirable' and all agreed with the Central government's stand that the Attorney-General might suitably explain the matter. The endeavours of the MPs to seek to impeach the judges seem to be 'wholly misconceived' to the *Hindustan Times*. And were it not for the fact that some quarters think it necessary to devalue

judges, for the courts are obstacles to social progress, one would not take the incidents too seriously, it added.

Locally, Burdwan with its lugubrious images of death and decomposition is still pushed for all it is worth. But Dhavan has disturbed the press quite a bit, *The Statesman* in particular, with his pragmatism. We are with you all the way so long as you are tough and so long as you dodge Marxist pitfalls which you should be able to see as plainly as we do—this roughly was the local press response Dhavan had got. The press critics will not admit it—when he has not been stealing the Marxist's electoral clothing, Dhavan has simply outflanked them on quite a few issues. To a large number of middle-stratum Bengalis it was like hearing the first Cuckoo in Spring. For Davan the real issue in West Bengal has become—can the Centre hold? The Left CPI was moving towards the Centrist stand. Without Jyoti Basu civil war could replace social reform and the ballot box could give way to the machine gun. However, despite a reported firm 'No' to a mid-term poll—it would be considered a dramatic and undesirable way out of the impasse—everyone has begun counting the chickens.

The resignation of Mr Seshan from the Achutha Menon ministry highlighting further fragmentation of political parties and the uncertain future of the ministry drew quite a few comments from the press. The ambivalence of the RSP arising out of different compulsions operating on it in these two States, the CPM's willingness to join any one to topple the ministry and others shortsightedly assisting the CPM designs—all these combined to create the instability, said the *Hindustan Times*.

In the context of the rising demand for election and reelection, Mr S. P. Sen Verma's proposal for separate machinery to handle the polls independent of the control of the executive provoked opposite reactions. While the *Hindusthan Standard* thought it deserved sympathetic consideration, *The Statesman* derided it, remarking 'that the nation would

be saddled with a further extension of bureaucracy under the control of the commission whose efficiency was most strikingly demonstrated at the time of the last presidential election when four whole days were taken to acquaint a most interested public with the result of the franchise of a few thousand legislators in a mere score of polling centres'.

News of the 'Naxalite menace' in Assam as revealed by the Assam Revenue Minister, Mr Choudhury, has been featured in all the papers all over India. It looked much more like a portent than a freak and 'unless Shillong displays greater vigour in implementing a radical programme of land reforms things may soon reach the point of no return', wrote the *Times of India* in a lengthy editorial followed by a bitterer one by *The Statesman*.

Reaction to the police attack on the SSP demonstration at New Delhi, about which almost all the major national newspapers commented, drew forth this remark from *The Statesman*: 'But what does he (George Fernandes) expect the police and other official agencies charged with the responsibility for ensuring compliance with the laws and the constitution to do?' Every one must be equal in the eye of the law and there can be no question of MPs being more equal than the others. To the *Hindustan Times*, the Government has been unduly apologetic about the measures taken by the Delhi police to control the SSP procession, a riotous section of which attempted to break the barricade in contravention of the law to enter the prohibited area. But according to others—the *Times of India*, the *Patrika*, the *Hindusthan Standard*—the processionists were not riotous. The demonstrators were non-violent. The pertinent point is that police officials have to be taught to use only the minimum force in dealing with demonstrations which are an essential feature of democracy—remarked the *Times of India*. But at the same time, it added, political parties should show due respect for constitutional processes. The *Patrika*

struck an unusual note and squarely held the Delhi police responsible. It is shocking that the Delhi police could indulge in such savagery even at the doorstep of the Parliament. There was no provocation, it wrote. The *Standard* shared the concern but queried suggestively—but can administrators and politicians be given a clean bill? *Patriot's*, however, was the most significant—After saying that the SSP demonstration was an unnecessary show of militancy and the police action not less culpable it remarked—'violence whether used by political protesters or by those who seek to suppress them will hereafter be counter-productive in this country because we are reaching almost the end of the age of protest?

Not the end of the age of protest, but the end of the age of liberalism when one took the view that broken windows were better than broken heads, seems to be approaching. The newspapers are busy counting broken heads and quantifying violence, the violence of the Marxists and the extremists, with considerable effect. But the most serious threat to life and property comes not from leftist mobs and individual criminals but from the communalists and the business houses who are above the law in the sense that they write it themselves. Take the cost in damage to property by the leftist actions vis-a-vis the annual cost of air pollution and the annual cost of adulteration of food and medicine and of a host of others things. Or take lives: left violence victims are numbered in scores but communal riot victims in thousands, while factory accidents, mainly because of lack of elementary safety precautions, cripple and injure many. One should reply to the law and order issue by telling the Indian people—if capitalism was born in violence, is itself a violence and if you really want to save lives and rupees, authorise one to civilise Indian big business.

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The article, *Internal Migration* will be resumed later—Editor.

## Misusing Governors

For Governors to indulge in politicising in the interest of the ruling party at the Centre is a distortion of the Constitution. The Assembly in Kashmir was discussing the demands for grants when it was suddenly prorogued, not for a constitutional breakdown but for helping the Chief Minister, whose majority was threatened, to avoid a confrontation in the legislature. It was as bad as the case in Haryana.

The Home Minister Mr Chavan, defended the actions of the Governors concerned by saying that they were bound by the advice of the Chief Ministers. But was the advice bona fide or mala fide? In the case of Haryana as well as that of Kashmir and before that in the case of Madhya Pradesh the advice was clearly motivated by the desire to prevent the Assembly from exercising its right to see whether or not the Chief Minister still enjoyed the majority. Mr Chavan's memory was repeatedly refreshed by MPs who reminded him how he had justified Dharma Vira's summons to the West Bengal Assembly to meet ahead of the date suggested by the Chief Minister in 1967. He had then conceded the Governor the discretion to ignore the Chief Minister's advice and call the Assembly.

A double-standard was again adopted in West Bengal by the Central leadership. When the Governor, Mr Dhavan, proceeded to perform his constitutional duty of restoring representative government in a manner which was for obvious reasons not liked by the Centre, he was pulled up and the Home Minister's defence in the Lok Sabha of Mr Dhavan's use of discretionary powers including his broadcast, was manifestly halting and half-hearted in striking contrast to his defence of the part played by the Governors of U.P. and Bihar in helping by questionable means the installation of governments in those States, so essential for the survival of the minority government of the ruling party at the Centre.

The Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr Shukla, assured the Rajya Sabha recently that "politically motivated persons" would be carefully weeded out" from the administration during President's Rule in West Bengal. But what about the purging of the politically partisan Governors of the Congress-ruled States?

... SOMNATH BHATTACHARYYA  
Howrah

## Whiphand

A new set of custodians have taken over law and order in Birbhum. They are the CRP. The local authorities called in these central units after a "revolutionary" action in a local college attributed to the proverbial scapegoats, the Naxalites. This pretext was at once seized to unleash a reign of terror and repression. Section 144 was immediately clamped on Suri, initially for a week and then extended indefinitely. These new custodians are roaming about the streets of the town on motor cycles and jeeps with their stens and, surprisingly, whips.

The CRP are challenging any and every gathering on the streets including those of old men, and without discrimination, dispersing these 'illegal' assemblies with liberal use of whips. This use of whips is clearly without any legal support. The brave followers of the old Gandhite, who cried himself hoarse by calling the Government headed by him as 'uncivilized, barbarous' and whose unabashed concern over the 'illegal' seizure of excess land by the landless, are now more concerned with showing a clean pair of heels and thus keeping their legal conscience clear. The only party of some local consequence, the SUC, is keeping mum, perhaps in a spell of love for its new found friend in the Bangla Congress and the civilized whipping Government ushered in by the resignation of dear Ajoyda.

ADINATH BHATTACHARYYA  
Seharapara, Suri

APRIL 18, 1970

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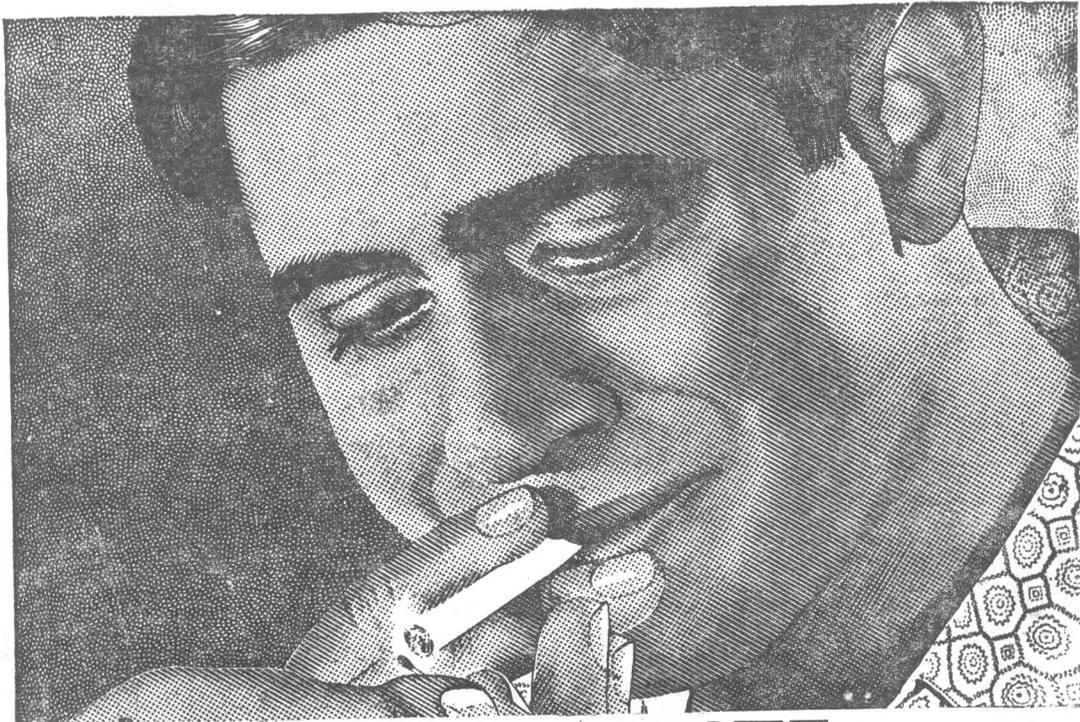
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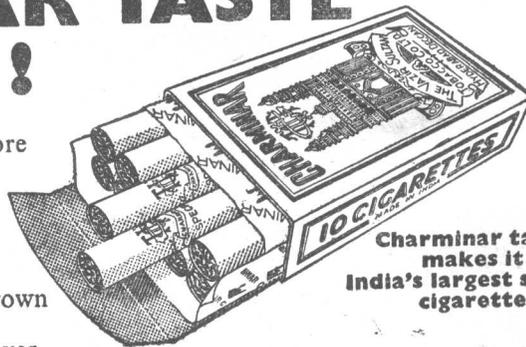
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