

frontier

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ON THE RACK

IN a sense, every government in a capitalist country is police raj. But the form that this raj has been taking in West Bengal is naked and unashamed. The rest of the country, New Delhi in particular, was mighty concerned in October about the gyrations of Indian democracy as seen, for instance in the clash of cliques represented by the Congress, old and new, in Uttar Pradesh. The papers in the capital, for days on end, devoted columns of high-falutin nonsense to the topic, as if the fate of India and democracy depended on which faction worsted the other in the unscrupulous game. And all the while, in West Bengal, the police went on a deliberate, massive spree of terrorism. Here the emperor could be seen without his clothes.

Let us be clear about one thing and the thing bears repetition: measures being adopted in this State cannot be blamed on the local bureaucrats alone. For the State is being ruled by the Centre and the ultimate responsibility for the massive arrests of Naxalites and Marxists, for the deaths, in police firing or in police custody, is that of the Central Government, of the Union Home Minister and the Prime Minister, that is, of Mrs Indira Gandhi.

There is a line of argument that violence has to be met with violence, that attacks on the police amount to waging war against the government and have to be repulsed. Instructions to this effect have been issued by the Centre. But wasn't police torture, which came much before the assassination of policemen, a war against a section of the people? Raids on educational institutions and statues were not so serious a phenomenon as to justify the savage police rampage not only in Calcutta, but over wide areas in the State.

Seldom a day passes in Calcutta without firing and the number of deaths is going up. Policemen are also dying, but that is the price they have to pay for the brutal policy of their masters, and sometimes for their own inhuman initiatives in secure lock-ups against people who are treated like animals. Pity the clan of the torturers when they die but also do not forget the maimed or dead young men and boys. The propounders of traditional Marxism describe their action as terroristic and unproductive. Maybe it is. But at certain stages of history, when people hear, or think they can hear, the rumblings of an upheaval, even

great Marxists have been known to be impatient. Guess who said this:

"It horrifies me—I give you my word—it horrifies me to find that there has been talk about bombs for *over six months*, yet not one has been made. And it is the most learned people who are doing the talking... Go to the youth, gentlemen! That is the only remedy!"

"Go to the youth. Form fighting squads at once everywhere... Let groups be at once organised of three, ten, thirty, etc., persons. Let them arm themselves at once as best as they can, be it with a revolver, a knife, a rag soaked in kerosene for starting fires... the evil today is inertness..."

This provocateur was none else but Lenin in 1905, impatient to widen the base of his then elitist party in the revolutionary upsurge sweeping Russia. Perhaps the creation of a wider base would make the Naxalites adopt other tactics—as it is, from Das Kapital to daggers is a long way. It is also understandable why the haves decry violations of the sanctity of human life. But is it so sacrosanct to those who have nothing to lose but their life? And is it so dear to the rulers in Andhra, Punjab, West Bengal or Bihar or at the Centre?

Penitent Partners

Politicians in West Bengal have not lost their occupation under President's rule. They are busy more than ever before, as was evident during the Pujas when traditionally they are expected to go into a brief hibernation. The CPI National Council's resolution calling for a triple alliance of the Eight-party Combination, Bangla Congress and the Congress(R) sent them into a flurry, and the season of goodwill was converted into a session of politicking. The seven other constituents of the EPC have risen in holy horror against the CPI resolution as if they did not know what the CPI meant when it pleaded for an alliance of the left and democratic forces or gave the slogan of a national democratic

front, as if Kerala was out of this world. Having acted under the leadership of the CPI so long, they cannot accuse the party now of springing a surprise on them by its unabashed advocacy of a policy to rehabilitate the Congress(R) in the State. Neither angry outbursts against the CPI nor endless iteration of anti-Congressism will convince anyone that the CPI tried to lead them up the garden path. Collaboration with the Congress(R) is the logical end of the path they have been treading for over a year, and they, at least most of them, will walk up to that end in spite of their fret and fume over the CPI perfidy. Election is the staple of their politics, and ideological considerations will weigh with them as long as the poll-date is away. Once the election is announced, the strategy of winning maximum seats will reign supreme, for these parties measure the success of their policies by the number of seats they can manage to win in an election. It is not without reason that the CPI has set forth its proposal in the context of a mid-term poll early next year.

Not that the CPI is not indulging in double-talk. The State leaders of the CPI have taken a fresh pledge to preserve the EPC, though they have committed themselves to implementing their National Council resolution. The two are incompatible, for anti-Congressism is one of the basic attitudes of the EPC, one of its two *raison d'être*, the other being opposition to the CPM. Obviously, the CPI plan is to remain in the EPC and to try to convert the other constituents to its policy of collaboration with the Congress(R). In plain words, the CPI proposes to subvert the EPC from within. If the plan does not succeed, it is quite on the cards that the CPI will go over to the Bangla Congress-Congress(R) alliance. No occasion for such desertion may, however, arise as long as the other partners of the EPC retain their longing for the Bangla Congress. They have not given up their efforts to bring the Bangla Congress within the EPC fold, though they know well that the Bangla Congress, in its turn,

will bring the Congress(R) in tow. They are prepared for an indirect alliance, a clandestine, not an open, affair. It is possible that while proclaiming loudly their anti-Congressism they are eagerly waiting for the CPI or Mr Ajoy Mukherjee to devise a face-saving formula which will enable them to join hands with the Congress(R) in an all-in anti-CPM alliance and claim at the same time they have not done so.

Had the matter rested with the CPI alone, a formula would perhaps have been found. But the Bangla Congress is out to avenge itself on the treachery of the EPC early this year when the eight parties pushed Mr Mukherjee to a point of no return and then backed out of the logical sequence of forming an alternative coalition with the Congress(R). By persistently courting the Bangla Congress in spite of all rebuffs the EPC has shown that it does not dare to stand on its own. It needs Mr Mukherjee as a crutch. Knowing that it is now in a position to dictate terms the Bangla Congress has formed the nucleus of a new alliance with the Congress(R) and invited the EPC to liquidate itself so that its constituents may qualify for inclusion in the alliance. By this the Bangla Congress is not only taking guard against any betrayal in future by its leftist allies but also ensuring that its voice may prevail in the coalition that it hopes to lead after the election. The recalibrants in the EPC could have refused to fall in line if they had any choice left. They cannot go over to the CPM for which their own policies and that of the CPM are responsible in equal measure. They cannot think of staying out of elections. It is, therefore, only a question of time for them to appear before Mr Mukherjee in sackcloth and ashes.

For Frontier contact

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Lessons Of Parel

Parel, a working class area in Bombay, has been for years a strong base of the communists. In the 1967 general election the communist candidate, Krishna Desai, won the Assembly seat by 28,847 votes of the 60,889 votes polled. After the murder of Desai by the Shiv Sena, indignation was imagined to be so high against the Shiv Sena that no one had the slightest doubt that it would lose in Parel. To clinch the issue, all the left and democratic forces joined hands with the Communists. The PSP, once an open ally of the Shiv Sena, the ruling Congress which teamed with the Shiv Sena in the Bombay Corporation Committee elections a few months ago, and even the Marxists, the arch enemy of the Right Communists, rallied behind Srimati Sarojini Desai to confront what they considered fascist reaction. The odds were safely heavy against the Shiv Sena. Red flags mingled with tricolours. Fiery speeches were delivered, spectacular torchlight processions were taken out, Communist women frequented the chawls, an intense three-month campaign was conducted. The Communists triumphantly, before the election, proclaimed that all the sane elements, specially the youth, of the Shiv Sena had been converted to communism. Sarojini was expected to win by even a bigger margin than Krishna did. Seventy-two per cent of the electorate turned out at the booths; the election was conducted fairly by the Government; nobody, either before or after, accused the Election Commission of a rigged election. The results shocked the communists and the Left of all hues. The Shiv Sena won the seat by a margin of 1,679 votes.

Parel is of course not the whole of Maharashtra, neither does it represent the whole of India. There is no immediate reason therefore to jump to the conclusion that the right forces are on the ascendant in India. The Shiv Sena might have combined with the Jana Sangh, Swatantra and the organisation Congress and carved out for itself a pocket in Bombay but that does not herald the re-emer-

gence of a strong communal force. Or it may. But the lesson is something else.

The qualitative difference between the organisation Congress and the ruling Congress has been quite arbitrarily drawn; and if the former has supported the Shiv Sena during the election by persuading the Jana Sangh to withdraw its candidate and thus preventing the Shiv Sena votes from being split, the same can be said of the ruling Congress under whose benevolent neutrality the Shiv Sena has grown from strength to strength in Bombay. It simply does not matter that at a certain point of time the ruling Congress puts out a gesture of hostility towards the Shiv Sena. Essentially the Congress and the Shiv Sena are hawks of the same feather. And the leftism of the PSP and the SSP is not seriously accepted by the CPI either. Therefore the unity of the left was a sham in Parel. Parel does not illustrate any kind of polarisation and the Shiv Sena victory is of a much bigger scale than what the margin apparently shows.

But the lesson is not this either. The Parel by-election points clearly to the stuff of which a communist mass base is made. The debacle of Sarojini is entirely due to Shiv Sena terrorism, say the communists. If threats of assault can thoroughly undermine loyalty to a cause and the zeal for revolution, it is time for communists to admit that election victories in a locality do not make it a communist stronghold. Voting for communists is not equal to belief in communism. Parel in fact illustrates the character of popularity of what is supposed to be communism; this was more diabolically illustrated in Indonesia when lakhs of so-called communists were murdered by Suharto. The mettle of a communist is proved during adversities and by that token Parel was never a communist stronghold. This is the lesson the CPM should have learnt in Kerala and it is high time it learnt the lesson in West Bengal without any more illusion. It would be a good thing if the fatuous belief of the communists in revolution through ballots receives a severe jolt. But it is a big if.

Moping Again

A big occasion, indeed—the 25th anniversary of the United Nations. There are again several new members with populations less than that of Calcutta while the most populous country in the world is still outside. Kings and Prime and Foreign Ministers strut on the expensive stage and make speeches signifying not much; there are exclusive parleys held between the Big Two or the Big Four. There is misunderstanding over invitations issued by Mr Nixon, though who can dare put him in his place? There are few people who take the U.N. seriously today, though it has doubtless some limited uses.

Mrs Indira Gandhi has been there. She is rather sore with Nixon at the moment, over the resumption of U.S. aid to Pakistan, not for the aggressive atrocities for which the U.S. has acquired an all-time fame. As for aid to Pakistan, even a former Chief of the Army Staff has pointed out the petulance of our opposition to aid to a country much smaller than India in size and resources. But General Kumaramangalam seemed to forget that we are cast for a big role, for a stance against Islamic Pakistan and Communist China and therefore we must be armed to the teeth. The teeth however crack at decisive moments. Even after 1962, even after the uncertain claims of 1965 when the height of military wisdom consisted in opening up one front after another, the one lesson of military history has not been learnt—that every country, even the biggest, always tries to avoid two fronts. But New Delhi is brave, because it bases itself on moral courage, a legacy of Gandhi and Nehru. That much cunning and duplicity go into the composition of this courage, that leaders shake in their choosth pyjamas when their stupid calculations go wrong has been made clear in a recent book on the 1962 border conflict. It is no wonder that even our patrons are at times rather tired of our reliance on their arms on the pretext of the twin-dangers of Pakistan and China. It should be obvious

to the intelligence systems of Washington and Moscow that the Chinese will not move unless New Delhi again decides to move forward. The reason why they supply arms to India is that they expect her to play her due role, as a satellite, when a big war starts. India should be glad to be in at the kill. The kill, however, is getting difficult to organise.

At times the stupidity of our international postures seems to haunt the midnight sleep of even the ruling politicians. Since Yahya Khan is having the best of both worlds, as we had in the heyday of Nehru, why can't we try again? But the gestures are tentative. Reports are spread about a softening of the so-called Peking line towards India, to be contradicted almost at once. One cannot annoy Moscow.

Most of our economic difficulties are due to the position in which we find ourselves in regard to China and

Pakistan. And the economic difficulties have developed into a political crisis. So long as New Delhi behaves like a client, the difficulties will multiply. Supply of small arms to West Bengal may soon boomerang. Why? How? Ask the Americans in Vietnam. But it is one of the paradoxes of history that the ruling classes never learn.

French Visitor

"The universe knows the importance of this visit", said General de Gaulle in Moscow in 1966. Since then the tone, more than the content, of French diplomacy has undergone a profound change. Georges Pompidou has not inherited the Gaullist flamboyance; his utilitarian approach to international affairs is based on a realistic appraisal of the influence a French President can wield. The end of the cold war, the Russian in-

vasion of Czechoslovakia and the conclusion of the Russo-German treaty have changed the perspective in Europe. This cannot but diminish the role of France as a Russian interlocutor. Moscow can now communicate with Bonn over the head of Paris. Although France cannot protest about this development, her displeasure over the way the Moscow-Bonn agreement was arrived at is for everyone to see. Berlin may still be a lever for France. But if the other three powers with responsibility over the city would agree, she could at the most block the ratification of the treaty. Since there is grace in not opposing in such a situation, Paris is likely to be resigned to a continuing improvement in Moscow-Bonn relations. Although France is depreciated in Moscow's estimate, the Kremlin leaders took meticulous care to ensure that Pompidou did not get the impression that his visit was given any less importance than his



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predecessor's four years ago. But the spontaneity was missing. So much had to be made up. The expectation was not much, so there was jubilation with what little was added to the annals of Franco-Soviet relations.

The protocol, that was signed at the end of the eight-day visit says that whenever a situation would arise which in the opinion of the two parties is disturbing for "world peace", the governments of Russia and France would immediately get in touch in order to act in concert on all aspects of it. Although France does not claim credit, for sound diplomatic reasons, de Gaulle actually fathered the idea of Franco-Soviet political concertation. Consultation on issues of mutual interest and united action were also there in the joint announcement of 1966. The new feature of the present protocol is that Foreign Ministers of the two countries will meet at least twice a year. Russia has not so far consulted France on any major issue. Whether it will be anything different in future is anybody's guess. Moscow considers that Bonn has a more important role to play on issues like the confirmation of the present borders of Europe, European security conference and the EEC's relations with East European countries. The Kremlin leaders must have been delighted to find Pompidou espousing the security conference proposal. This surely does not amount to a departure in French policy, but the change in emphasis is striking.

Pompidou was no less interested in steadying economic cooperation than in institutionalising political relations. So he asked a dozen French industrialists, who are doing good business in Russia, to assist in negotiations. France enjoys a very favourable trade balance with Russia which is just the opposite of the latter's economic relations with the developing countries. France buys huge quantities of raw materials from Russia but very few finished products. The trade imbalance cannot be corrected so long as this trend continues. Perhaps Russia does not mind, there are so many developing countries to mulct.

View from Delhi

Foreign Policy Dithers

FROM A POLITICAL
CORRESPONDENT

IN terms of foreign policy digests, it is still moot if New Delhi's public stance of anti-Americanism and profession of cordiality towards China amidst a growing solicitude for the Soviet Union means anything at all. Mrs Indira Gandhi has reason to be piqued about many things beginning with the resumption of U.S. arms sale to Pakistan (though the Soviet Union has been selling arms to both India and Pakistan). The absence of Ambassador Keating at the Palam airport to see Mrs Gandhi off is as much a non-event as Mrs Gandhi's decision to skip President Nixon's dinner. But to those on the New Delhi beat the week's dizzy developments do not add up to a qualitative change in India's foreign policy. This is for more reasons than one. The facts speak better.

On the eve of her departure from New Delhi, Mrs Gandhi had sought a meeting with President Nixon and had given him a clear ten-day notice. But the Great Society's President seemed to have missed the point and thought an invitation to dinner along with other dignitaries would suffice. Mrs Gandhi had all the more reason to be piqued because President Yahya Khan got an "audience" with the President while she could not. To crown it all came the silly anti-climax in the form of the Keating episode at the New Delhi end. The United States Embassy's version about some stupid clerk forgetting to wake the Ambassador up lack credibility. But so does the Government of India's planted stories in the Press. According to those close to the local Capitol, following the skyjacking episodes, Ambassador Keating's special room has been fortified with special electronic equipment, etc. to protect him and he is not all that easily accessible. It is possible some clerk forgot to wake him up. But the

Government of India's hypersensitivity to the lapse was remarkable. A certain spokesman briefing a handful of chosen scribes made no secret of the Government of India's displeasure at the lapse which indeed did not constitute any breach of protocol. "He was not required to be there and yet we wanted him to be there," the spokesman's attitude seemed to be. When confronted with a straight question about Ambassador Keating, the spokesman sheepishly said he did not know anything but he had heard that the Ambassador had overslept; But the fact remains that within two hours of the departure of the Prime Minister's aircraft to Moscow, the United States Embassy rang up the Chief of Protocol to explain the jam. It looks although the Government of India was keen on building up an anti-United States stance to please somebody and not out of any conviction.

The Cairo episode has been oversold by somebody. Mr Bahadur Singh never met Kuo Mo-jo. He did meet the Chinese Ambassador in Cairo but then such meetings had taken place in about half-a-dozen other capitals without any fuss. The story from London about China suggesting talks with the restoration of Ambassador-level relations as the first step is hardly credible because New Delhi was prompt to deny the story. All that one can say is that New Delhi wants to keep the public pre-ence that it is for a settlement with China while in fact it is not. There is no point in New Delhi's trying to fool the public because it was India that refused to send its ambassador back to Peking and the initiative in this direction has to come from India. It would, however, seem that there was a deliberate plan behind the planted stories about Chinese anxiety to mend their fences with India.

A footnote to the larger drama was the interview given by King Mahendra to a visiting Indian journalist, about India and Nepal exchanging military information. True, Indo-Nepalese relations are at the lowest ebb and King Mahendra wants to do

something to improve them. But his interview as played up by this particular newspaper would put him at odds with China because the interview made it appear that he was hostile to China. It would hardly be surprising if the interview version is contradicted from Kathmandu but the fact remains that India and Nepal are exchanging vital military data. When the Indo-Nepalese treaty lapses this month a new treaty is likely to replace it. It is also possible that despite Nepal's opposition to an Indian military mission in Kathmandu the new treaty is likely to provide for closer military co-operation between the two countries and our embassy in Nepal might have a military attache. One knows the significance of such a change.

J.R. and P.M.

On the domestic front, the developments have been exasperating. After the Uttar Pradesh debacle Mrs Gandhi is in search of scapegoats and Mr. Tripathi is by gad right when he says the communists and cryptos are behind the new campaign. It was common knowledge in New Delhi that Mrs Gandhi was grooming Mr Yadav, formerly of the CPI, as the next party boss. But all over the country, the real conflict appears to be between Mr Jagjivan Ram and Mrs Gandhi and the fact the pro-Moscow Press has launched a smear campaign against Mr Jagjivan Ram would seem to confirm the theory. In almost all the Congress-R States, Mr Jagjivan Ram has established links with the anti-Indira Gandhi factions and is set to seek re-election to party presidency irrespective of what Mrs Gandhi thinks about it. There is little doubt that Mrs Jagjivan Ram has established firm control over the party's affairs in his home State, Bihar. In Uttar Pradesh Mr Jagjivan Ram and Mrs Gandhi are at loggerheads. At the time of this writing there are reports that Mrs Gandhi will effect a drastic reshuffle of the party leadership in Uttar Pradesh as soon as she gets back home. But can she defy Mr Jagjivan Ram on this?

The party which began with a mas-

ter plan to topple the Syndicate ministries in States has settled for toppling its own ministries. The next three months will test Mrs Gandhi's strength in the party against a powerful rival like Mr Jagjivan Ram who claims an all-India faction.

The stunning Shiv Sena victory in Bombay is a personal setback to Mrs Gandhi and her drummer boys who want an open alliance with the CPI. Mr Jagjivan Ram was opposed to the party's open truck with the CPI but the pressure tactics of Mrs Gandhi prevailed and in the bargain the Congress-R's image has suffered. The first generation working class in Bombay was indeed revolutionary while the third or fourth generation working class votes with the Shiv Sena despite Mr S. A. Dange's sustained work in the Parel-Lal Baug area. The extreme right might claim the verdict to be a defeat for the CPI-Congress-R alliance. But there is more significance to this by-election result than mere party equations. Some might call it a vote for parochialism and not so much an anti-socialist vote. But the vote in itself was revealing. It underlines the irrelevance of the Kerala model for the rest of the country. The Congress-R's alliance with the CPI may not be a decisive factor. Mr Jagjivan Ram might claim vindication of his theory of opposition to such an alliance. The issue was no doubt discussed in depth in Patna and the Young Turks emerged the strongest advocates of such an alliance. This gave one impression that Mr Chavan favours such a left-of-centre compact. But the fact remains that if Mr Chavan has to choose between the Shiv Sena and the CPI, he would choose the former.

Kerala and Parel together provide a new syndrome in Indian politics. The winter session of Parliament beginning November 6 would witness the new syndrome in action. It is now fairly certain that Mr Bal Thackeray will return to the Lok Sabha from one of the Bombay constituencies. The devaluation of party politics need not wait that long.

October 24, 1970

Centre And W. Bengal

R. P. MULLICK

OF late there has been a perceptible swing in the Centre's policy apropos West Bengal. The previous stance that there would be no interim elections till the "law and order situation" improves seems to be yielding place to new orientations. The ruling circles are thinking of the possibility of bringing about a "new" post-election pattern of party positions and alignments in the West Bengal legislature—somewhat on the Kerala line, as is commonly supposed—that would be more amenable to the exercise of indirect control by the Congress(R) over the emerging Cabinet.

The difficulties of repeating Kerala after the imposition of President's rule are due to the methods followed in the "operations" resorted to by Naxalite guerillas in the province. That their tactics and strategy are proving a baffle-wall to the Centre's Intelligence sleuths, is now clear. In fact, all sorts of experiments in making the policing of West Bengal fool-proof have been checkmated by leaks in the administrative system itself. Two top-notch experts on West Bengal affairs, Mr L. P. Singh of the Home Ministry, and Mr Verma of the Central Intelligence, have failed so far to advise the Central Government properly as to what political-cum-administrative system is likely to gear up the entire administrative machinery in the province to the Centre's purpose, which is to crush the Naxalites out of existence.

The political lobbies of the capital, and the over-precocious diplomats of Chanakyapuri are keen to sound Peking with new undertones of amiability, and ascertain whether a Sino-Indian detente is likely to lead to a change in Peking's attitude towards the "ultra-revolutionists" working in the Eastern region in particular and, in general throughout the country. However, the mouthpieces—newspapers, All India Radio, news agencies—of India's rising oligopoly—the

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dialectically conflicting yet co-existing combine of the ex-feudals with the neo-monopolists of the industrial-financial empire—are cautious. Their comments give out the clue to the mind of the ruling class: no truck with Peking now beyond the formal opening-up of diplomatic intercourse at ambassadorial level, strictly according to protocol. Evidently the hard-headed schemers of policy do not expect any let-up in the activities of the Nagas, the Mizos or the Naxalites—all of whom they put down in one category.

Increasing attention to police arrangements by the ruling hawks is now alternated with the initiation of experimentation in parliamentary politics, the objective being the formation of a viable combination of right-wingers, the pseudo-left and the so-called democratic socialists in West Bengal out of the many permutations theoretically possible.

A few facts have brought the Centre face to face with the inevitability of allowing normal expression to people's wish through the legislature.

No punitive legislation, contrived from above by the Centre, no draconian ordinance, however facetiously worded, is likely to deceive public opinion in West Bengal. No "new" and secretive, powers given to squads of policemen of ordinary rank, whether in uniform or in plain clothes, to indulge in anti-guerrilla activities to smother the Naxalite guerrillas in street encounters or in open countryside battles will spare the public; in fact such clashes are bound to bring the latter increasingly within the ambit of confrontations between the "ultra" revolutionaries and the agents of administration, thus paving the way to civil war which is what the Centre fears is the objective of the revolutionaries.

A merely administrative solution to political problems is generally a near-impossibility, in West Bengal—as the Centre is now finding it out—it is absolutely impossible, inasmuch as the lower echelons of the administrative set-up are saturated with sympathisers and supporters of the revolu-

tionaries, more, with "crypto-revolutionists".

The secret "master plan" of the political wing of the Centre's Intelligence to bring about a complete pulverisation of the party apparatus of the CPM through the provocation of inter-party feuds, contrived political murders by trained anti-social roughs and hirelings in the pay of Intelligence, distraction through infertuous fracas and violent battles between cadres on all fronts (especially ruinous in the trade union sphere), has failed.

The intended coup in parliamentary politics in West Bengal, viz. working out a viable understanding as also a spelled out contract between the eight-party front, the Bangla Congress and the ruling Congress, could not be carried out—thanks to the leftist scruples of some among the eight-fronters.

It would be interesting to quote in this context from one of the mouthpieces of the ruling class, which would show how glib and unabashed can be the politics of power among parasites who have wielded the strings thereof without deserving it "...But they may yet agree to a scheme by which the Bangla Congress is allotted a large enough proportion of the seats contested so that it can set apart some of these for the New Congress". [*Times of India*: October 13, 1970]. No wonder, Delhi is now waking up to make the splendid discovery that there, after all, could be an interim election in West Bengal.

Kerala

"The Kerala Model"

RAMJI

THE logic of politics in Kerala is certainly a strain on even the most susceptible credulity. Thus, 37 could contain a bigger chunk of 'popular mandate' than 60. The minifront forced a mid-term election to secure a 'popular mandate' for the

nine-month-old Achutha Menon Ministry. Its strength in the Assembly got whittled down, in the process, from 60 to 37. Yet, a more popular mandate has been, allegedly, bagged and the minifront is back in power and determined to continue its "good work". The support of the 32-member Congress(N) bloc gives it a slender and very shaky majority. But the Congress never campaigned for a 'popular mandate' for the minifront. It had asserted repeatedly that it was campaigning for itself and not the minifront. And after the elections too, at the highest level, the Congress has announced that there is no 'alliance' but only an understanding with the minifront, although the CPI leader, Mr M. N. Govindan Nair, keeps on asserting that the Congress is part of the ruling front. This dichotomy of the ruling front keeps surfacing constantly in the local press. The Congress leaders assert that the minifront would carry out the Congress party's programmes, while the minifronters state it will carry on the largely mythical, newspaper-made, 'good' administration.

The 'goodness' of this administration is being questioned by papers like the *Mathrubhumi*, the *Manroma* and the *Deepika*, which were the very props and ardent propagandists of the first Achutha Menon Ministry. Immediately after the Ministry assumed charge, the police went into action against agricultural workers in the Kuttanad area at Kumarakom. The workers were peacefully agitating against the attempt of landlords to use black legs for agricultural work. At the behest of the landlords, the police, with virility accentuated by the re-accession of the Muslim Leaguer, Mohamed Koya, as Home Minister, went into action against the agricultural workers. The results were highly heartening to the landlords: Over 145 agricultural workers, including women, hospitalised and a countless number beaten and scattered. The police assault was so brutal that it shocked the entire State and forced the Congress and CPI leaders, Mr A. K. Antony and

Mr M. N. Govindan Nair, to visit the area and issue a statement condemning the police excess and demanding an enquiry. For whatever it is worth, an enquiry has been promised by the Government. While this enquiry would, as usual, be a hollow and formal gesture, the reaction of the Achutha Menon Ministry and the big vernacular press to the joint CPI-Congress statement has been highly interesting and significant. The joint statement has demanded an assurance from the Government that the police would not interfere in the legitimate agitations of workers and peasants and that the mere label of 'Marxist atrocity' should not be used as an excuse for police vandalism against workers and peasants. Yet the Government has revealed no inkling that the anti-labour pro-vested interest police policy of the first Achutha Menon ministry would be changed in any manner. Actually, police repression is likely to be intensified. The entire Kuttanad rice bowl is now swarming with armed police units and the policemen are carrying out midnight sorties to seek and drive away agricultural workers from their huts. The entire area is under a reign of terror and menfolk belonging to the working class and suspected of pro-Marxist loyalties find it difficult to approach their homes.

The reaction in the big press to the joint statement of the CPI and Congress leaders has been characteristic. These papers in their editorials while pontificating on the need for law and order and the desirability of police interference to curb the 'violence' of workers, have sounded a note of warning to the minifront Ministry, that they should in no case follow the Marxist technique of carrying on popular struggles while remaining in power, and that the police should interfere to protect vested interests. This demand is being echoed by the Kerala Congress too, a leading light of which, Mr E. John Jacobs, with his following of landlords, refuses to pay minimum wages to Kuttanad agricultural workers. Mr Achutha Menon is in a

quandary. He has to follow a pro-vested interest policy or face the risk of being thrown out from power. And he has, obviously, opted for the former policy despite the statement of his party secretary, Mr M. N. Govindan Nair, which now stands revealed as a tongue-in-the-cheek utterance calculated to appease the have-nots in general and the incensed Kuttanad agricultural workers in particular.

In A Fix

With the Congress party in full cry, doing backseat driving, the face of the Ministry is rather gloomy. If Mr Menon tries to implement any progressive policies in a genuine manner, he is sure to run foul of the big press and a big chunk of the Congress party too. And it is too much to expect that with the Congress(N) in such a dominant position it would allow Mr Menon to have his way. Already, there is a difference of opinion in the Congress itself. A section is very much disappointed over the renunciation of overt power by the party. There were and are many aspirants in the Congress for Cabinet seats. And in spite of Indira's socialism and all that, the Congress in its new garb has not basically changed in Kerala. To be the catspaw of the Congress spells certain doom for the CPI leadership too in Kerala. Since the Congress holds the Ministry on a short leash, the progress of the Ministry can only be determined and limited by the Congress and Congress alone. Incidentally, the policy statement of Achutha Menon makes interesting reading. He has airily promised the solution of unemployment through rapid industrialisation. No one with any idea of the realities of Kerala can take the promise as anything but an impractical political propaganda stunt. There is nothing in the policy statement about nationalisation of plantations, which the first Ministry of Mr Achutha Menon had threatened to carry out urgently. He has promised that the police would interfere in struggles by workers only

if they tend to be violent. Since the police are the judges and executioners too of such violence, the repressive police policy is sure to continue. Further, the Ministry is abjectly dependent on the big press solidly ranged behind vested interests.

To cap every thing comes the internal conflict of the CPI. Mr T. V. Thomas, the veteran CPI leader and the brain behind the original conspiracy to oust Namboodiripad from power with the help of the Kerala Congress and the Congress, has been completely ignored. He is highly incensed over the fact that under the excuse of bringing in new faces he has been omitted from the Cabinet. He did not attend the swearing in ceremony and it is learnt that he is nursing his grouse and is sure to come out with his own brand of action which might split the CPI and help to throw the Ministry from power. An issue over which there would be a polarisation of forces, cutting across the overt groupings, is the election to the Rajya Sabha seat vacated by Mr Achutha Menon. There is a Congress contender in the field. The CPI made a slight whimper stating that the seat belonged to them. But it has been effectively strangled by the real power-wielder, the Congress(N).

Verbal radicalism is rampant in Kerala now. The latest to join the ranks of the radicals is the Syndicate Congress, which is trying to regroup its following by some ultra radical slogans that would do justice to the Naxalites even. There is an impending change of leadership in the Syndicate Congress and the younger elements, led by Mr Sankara Narayanan, the present Secretary, are bound to assert themselves. And this would help to provide point and credibility to the radical stance of the Syndicate Congress here.

By opting for ministerial power the RSP in Kerala has broken away from its national leadership. And the RSP here has become more loyal than the king in upholding a Congress supported minifront. The PSP put across, initially, an unedifying struggle for ministership. The Tri-

vandrum candidate of this party was outvoted. But the grouse remains. The Trivandrum district unit of the party is highly worked up over the fact that there is no representative of Trivandrum district in the Cabinet.

All in all, it is a highly troubled, hotchpotch set-up that is now in power in Kerala. And if this "Kerala model" is going to be applied to the entire country, the have-nots may yet find that they and their interests could sink lower than the rock bottom.

Manipur

Gyrating Towards Statehood

ILA

MR K. C. Pant made recently a laconic observation to the effect that because of some technical difficulties the bill granting statehood to Tripura and Manipur could not be introduced in the winter session of Parliament. It may be true. But behind this dangle-and-withdraw game there are factors and forces about which perhaps Mr Pant could not be explicit.

First and foremost, Manipur should contrive to fall in the Congress(R) fold and then it can expect statehood as a lucky windfall from the fairy tale contraption that is New Delhi today. Mrs Gandhi, with Kerala feathering her cap, has to be cautious and calculated yet. No election will be too strong to persuade her to be swift or soft in this regard. She will time her strokes well. Let Manipur prove its bona fides. Till then she very well can wait. Let Manipur learn its own lesson from Kerala. It will be some time yet before Manipur can establish its credentials with the super-strategist of a Prime Minister that is Mrs Gandhi.

And in the meantime let other things be sorted out. The hill districts within Manipur have been promised some autonomy of sorts. This play can very well be played long, and lethally. More than two-

thirds of Manipur is hilly and its inhabitants tribal. This populous majority and vast region of hills, because of its affinities in culture and history, seek merger with Nagaland. New Delhi will exploit this popular urge to its own advantage and spite Manipur. And it has two ready-made excuses:

First, Nagaland must not become territorially sizeable and significant. Let the hostiles be tamed first. 'Pacifying' and 'resettling' the tribes in a sprawling, jungle-and-hill-dotted Nagaland would become well nigh impossible if the present frontiers of this state are extended or added to. Two: Even if Mrs Gandhi on a generous impulse concedes reason behind this demand there would be 'practical' difficulties. Poor Mrs Gandhi who means well, but...

What are these 'practical' snags? One: It would encourage fragmentation of the country and demands for Vidarbha, Telengana, and Vishal Haryana will receive an unexpected fillip if the hill regions of Manipur were to be tagged away to Nagaland. So, Mrs Gandhi would loathe presiding over the peeling and parceling

out of Mother India. Two: For the loaves and fishes of office some of the tribal leaders in Manipur regard the integration 'cry' as preposterous; and recalling the age-old ties with Manipur, would gratefully pledge to stay with it through thick and thin.

So far the formulations appear quite neat and obligingly helpful. But there are a few straws in the wind. New Delhi is gravely mistaken if it suffers from the illusion of Manipuri Vaishnavism being especially wedded to non-violence. Disaffection is likely to spill over. As if illustrating the mood of the valley and the future modes of fight, recently Rani Gaidilieu was threatened with loss of life. Jadonang, a cousin of the Rani, was a freedom fighter and a martyr for Manipur.

But the Rani retains her old fire. She demanded in 1932 merger of all Naga areas into one unit. The British jailed her to a term of 14 years. The British were very favourably disposed to the Raja of Manipur. New Delhi being the legatee of the British, let Manipur take heart, but those sharing the Rani's views beware—and despair.

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Strategy For Development : India, China And The Soviet Union—I

RANJAN SENGUPTA

THE strategy for economic development in India is more or less known to many of us; the consequences thereof are well known to all of us.

In the first two decades of the revolution in the Soviet Union and in China the foundations for long-term growth were laid. It was by no means an easy task. Many a battle was fought in order to work out the strategy; and a continuous struggle was waged to carry it out. A comparative study of China and the Soviet Union in this respect is interesting by itself, and highly instructive for India now.

On the eve of the October Revolution, the so-called Narodniki school of thought maintained that once the feudal aristocracy had fallen, Russia could strive for a kind of agrarian communism based on traditional village institutions such as the village commune (mir). This would enable Russia to avoid the road to industrial capitalism followed in the West. Lenin in his study *On The Development of Capitalism in Russia* contended that capitalism had already developed in Russia on a considerable scale, in the rural economy as well. Agriculture was increasingly assuming an entrepreneurial character; land was becoming a commodity to be bought and sold, large-scale agriculture based on machinery had arrived on the scene. Against such tendencies the mir as an institution was powerless. Instead of preventing the growth of social differentiation, it frequently became dominated by the kulaks (rich peasants) to further their own interests. According to Lenin, an attempt to preserve the old institutions, therefore, would merely help perpetuate the old system of semi-serf, semi-free labour—a system which contained all the horrors of exploitation and oppression.

He then drew the inevitable conclusion: to hope to bypass capitalism and to prevent proletarianisation of the peasantry was utopian and reactionary; instead a firm smytchka or alliance of the proletariat with the peasantry had to be forged for fulfilling the historic mission of overthrowing and supplanting capitalism.

History vindicated Lenin. One of the most powerful of the currents that were carrying events towards the Soviet Revolution of October 1917 was the movement among the peasants who were seizing landed estates by direct action on a growing scale. In industry a parallel form of direct action—gherao of the management, arrest of technocrats by workers, forcible expulsion from factories of unpopular foremen, and so on—was undermining the authority of the capitalists. Finally, in the October Revolution the proletariat and the peasantry seized political power by force.

In the first eight months no sweeping measures of confiscation or nationalisation were immediately proposed. The State power made an attempt to pass to the new social relationship, while adapting itself to the conditions then prevailing as much as possible, as gradually as possible and breaking with as little of the old as possible. This transitional state capitalism, characterised by control over private trade and industry rather than extensive socialisation, did not survive the summer of 1918, thanks to the outbreak of civil war supported by the armed intervention of the wolves of foreign imperialists.

Over-riding Necessity

In the conditions of that time it was historically and economically inevitable that military necessity would rule all, and problems of industry and

agriculture would be virtually identified with the problem of military supplies. The system of the so-called War Communism was thus not a normal economic policy: it was a grim struggle for survival. The dislocation was total, and the shortage acute. The meagre daily bread ration of one-eighth of a pound for workers was to be issued only on alternate days. The peasantry suffered no less. In October 1920 the purchasing power of the rouble was no more than one per cent of what it had been in October 1917: and what is worse, prices of manufactured goods were rising more steeply than those of agricultural goods. The Soviet Government could no longer obtain the necessary resources through the normal process of the market. It could obtain these resources only by measures of coercion, and by centralised control and distribution of supplies.

The surplus produce of each peasant farm was now subjected to compulsory requisitioning. It was, of course, unavoidable; without it there is small doubt that starvation in the towns in the winter of 1919-20 would have been catastrophic, and the army might have collapsed. In any event, the sown area shrank, partly owing to a peasants' strike and partly owing to the direct destruction of manpower and means of cultivation by the war. An epidemic of peasant risings was spreading over the Volga region and west Siberia. And clearly the smytchka was threatened.

At the end of the civil war, the period of reconstruction and the New Economic Policy began. Certain small enterprises were denationalised; and decentralisation of industries was introduced. The market was restored to a limited extent, and the system of requisitioning was replaced by agricultural tax in kind. Meanwhile the

impending "scissors crisis" was looming large on the horizon.

In the course of 1922 the terms of trade between industry and agriculture were moving in favour of the latter; but the trend was sharply reversed. In 1923, the rate of exchange became increasingly unfavourable to agriculture; the blades of scissors opened more and more. The so-called crisis gave rise to a heated debate which foreshadowed much more fundamental differences about long-term policy which were to crystallise over the next few years and eventually to form the basis for serious political antagonism.

Investment Resources

The principle of rapid industrialisation as a means of strengthening the socialist revolution and fulfilling its promises was accepted by the Party Congress in December 1925. This raised the basic question as to the source from which the resources for investment could be mobilised. The reliance on foreign capital as a source was ruled out, first because it was not politically acceptable, secondly because it was not available anyway. The other possible source was to import machinery from abroad financed by the earnings of grain export. But this brought one round the circle again to the problem of how to increase the available flow of agricultural goods from a backward and slow-moving peasant agriculture.

Another aspect of the industrialisation debate was whether priority should be given in the construction programme to heavy industry which would permit the rate of total construction to be stepped up sooner, or whether priority should be given to light industry which would yield its fruits more quickly in a larger supply of consumers' goods, with which the urban standard of life could be improved or more agricultural supplies could be tempted from the peasantry.

Trotsky and his principal economic adviser Preobrazhensky argued that Soviet Russia must pass through a stage of primitive socialist accumulation postulated by Marx in his analysis of the history of capitalism.

Part of the product or income of the small-scale peasant economy must be exploited or alienated by the State, through taxation or price policy, and used to expand industry. This dictatorship-of-industry thesis was firmly rejected in principle. For it would have undermined the foundation of the *smytchka*. Furthermore, economically it might even reduce the total volume of real resources which agriculture supplied to industry. The experience of War Communism had already shown that the possibility of squeezing the peasant was a limited one outside a short period, and that even if he were subjected to requisition, the total area sown might fall.

On the other hand, another group of economists, e.g. Kondratiev and Sokolnikov, argued that the overall growth rate would be maximised by concentrating investment in agriculture. Some people in this group frankly favoured a strong private peasantry and were little concerned with the rate of industrial growth. Bukharin, for instance, appreciated the alleged relentless drive of the kulaks for raising output. Besides, the theories of "equilibrium" and "spontaneity" were invoked. In terms of the theory of equilibrium the sector of small peasant farming should be allowed to glide peacefully forward side by side with the socialist sector of large-scale industry so that eventually these two parallel lines as it were would meet and produce socialism. This theory was sought to be further reinforced by referring to the theory of spontaneity. It was claimed that in the days of capitalism in Russia, industry developed on a capitalist basis, and the rural districts followed the capitalist towns spontaneously, automatically, changing the image of the capitalist towns. Since this was what happened under capitalism, why should it not happen again under the Soviet economic system as well, why should not the rural districts, small peasant farming, follow the socialist towns automatically and change spontaneously the image of socialist towns? Hence the question: Is it worthwhile bother-

ing about organising state farms and collective farms if the rural districts can follow the socialist towns without any interference?

Stalin attacked these theories as contradictory to Marxism-Leninism. For Lenin has said: as long as we live in a country where small-peasant farming predominates there is a firmer economic basis for capitalism in Russia than for communism.

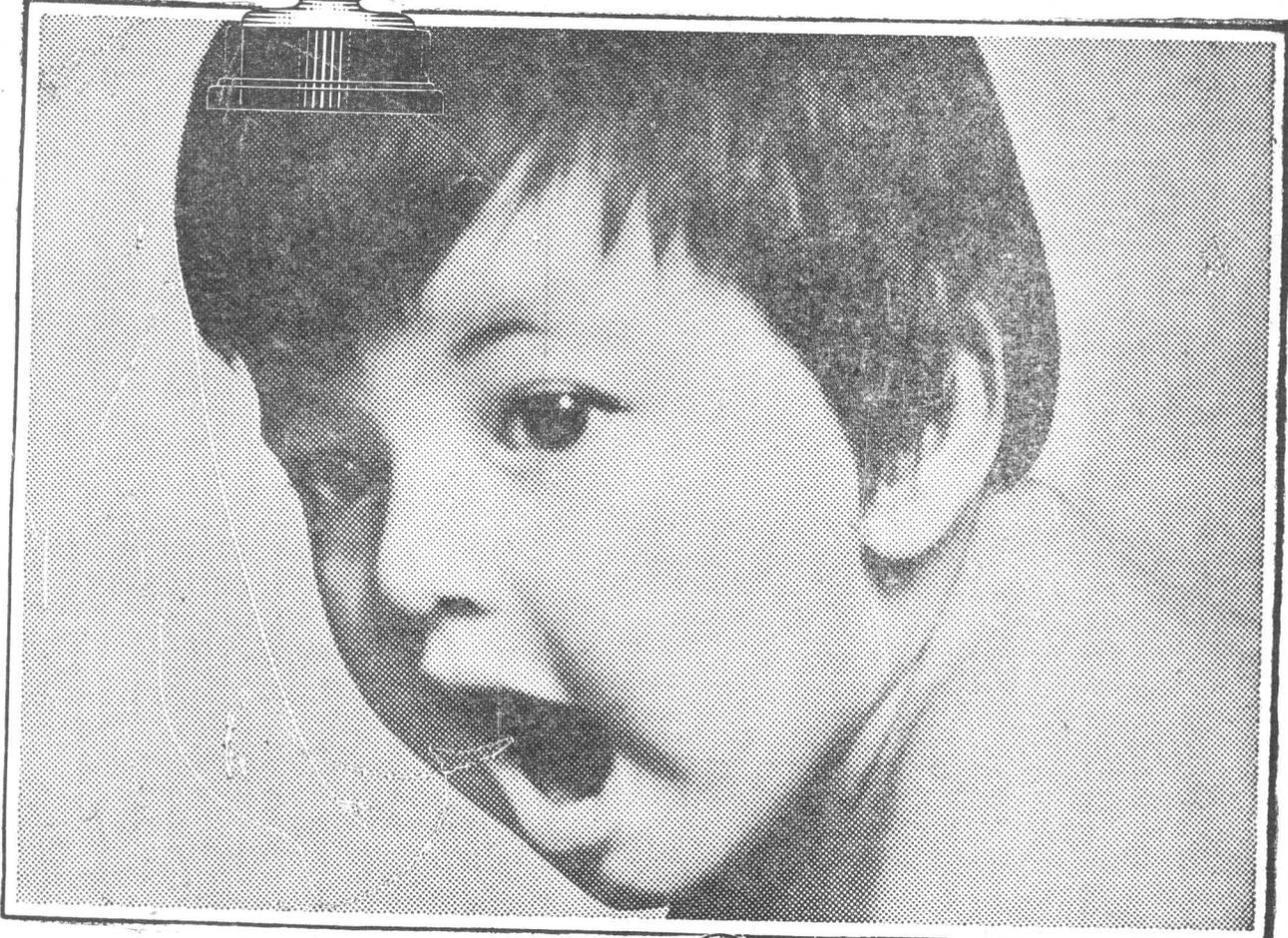
As for the assumption that agricultural investment could yield maximum returns which in turn would make it possible to import industrial machinery for rapid industrialisation, it was argued that dependence on the world market for essential equipment was politically and socially dangerous.

It was in this atmosphere that the epoch-making decision was taken at the 15th Party Congress (1925) to build the industrialisation programme upon the introduction of large-scale farming on co-operative lines as its corner stone. And this firmly set the basic course for the Soviet economy in the coming decades.

The First Five Year Plan was launched in 1929, and the Second Plan in 1933. The proportion of national income devoted to net investment was around 20 per cent, with heavy emphasis on investment in large-scale industries producing capital goods. On the agricultural front, the crucial battle of the collectivisation campaign was set in motion in 1929-30 with the despatch of special detachments of young communists from towns to the villages as part-organisers, part-propagandists to storm the citadel of age-long peasant traditions under the banner of a radically new way of life for the village. The winter and summer of that "spinal" year was to witness those ten months of turmoil in the village from which the new type of Soviet village was to be born. In the words of Dobb, the birth-pangs were sharp; the attendant midwifery was rough. But those few months may well come to be regarded as a turning-point in the economic history both of Europe and of Asia in the twentieth century. (To be concluded)



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Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

THE much talked-about octroi has been postponed for some time more since the West Bengal Government could not make the necessary preparations. Since we are going to have it anyway, I would wish that the messy business should be started as soon as possible and we should know how far it is going to affect our pockets. But the officials cannot be hustled. They want to do everything in their own time.

Personally, my own introduction to octroi was not one to recommend it as a pleasant experience. At the age of 10 or so I was travelling with my family and arrived in a town of the undivided Punjab at the early hour of three in the morning after two sleepless nights. By the time we were settled in the tonga with our things, I was dozing. Suddenly, I was startled at the sight of two figures, their faces almost covered, dart out from what looked like a shop and start pulling at our luggage. I was sure this was nothing but highway robbery in the bitterly cold dark night. But I was assured it was nothing of the sort. They were only the chungiwallahs, as the octroi men are called. A few annas were quickly passed and we went on our way. In point of fact, I learnt we had nothing which could be taxed. But the alternative was to unload everything and wait in the cold for the chungiwallahs to search them while we waited shivering in the cold.

Later on in life I had again the misfortune of travelling through octroi-infested areas and made the mistake of taking with me a camera and a typewriter which looked brand new. Through each town I passed I had to pay the octroi on these two articles of personal use. Perhaps, these things are better ordered now. But since the octroi is a feudal relic and most things over here are rather crude, we can and should expect the worst when octroi starts in Calcutta.

In spite of everything, however, if

it improves conditions in and around Calcutta even marginally, let us have the thing and done with it. There must basically be some good in the idea, since the Chambers of Commerce are so staunchly opposed to it. But even when it is a question of making the people pay more, the bureaucracy cannot organise the thing.

All this is symptomatic of the creeping paralysis which is overtaking the chief agents of the ruling classes, the bureaucrats in the government and the boxwallahs or managers in industry. Inefficiency and indiscipline are the two excuses trotted out by all the gentlemen to cover up their own failings in getting very little done.

No doubt there are individually inefficient and indisciplined workers and employees, both in government and industry. But it is an insult to the whole nation to impute inefficiency and indiscipline on the scale it is freely done by the managers, which term includes the bureaucrats in high official positions. By inference, they themselves are the only efficient and disciplined people about and but for them, everything would fall apart. Too often, however, they are just figureheads doing all that is possible to mess up things. If any work goes on, it is in spite of them.

All this is a legacy of our British days which decades of independence have done little if anything to change, though the British have changed much in their own country. The system of education is one of the causes. Importance of English is another. The cleavage between the managers and those who work for them is almost as great as when all officers were British. As a result there are two worlds in any office or industry, one of the highbrows and the other of the common people and in between a sort of no man's land. Rules are made which are out of touch with reality and are broken of necessity. This looks like indiscipline from the other side and any punishment is bound to lead to hardening of attitudes. To an officer who never sets foot outside except in car, getting there on time is simply a question of a good habit. To a

worker or employee who in spite of his best efforts is late and is cautioned or made to suffer in any way, it smacks of callousness on the part of his officer, which it usually is. Small wonder then that if things go beyond his endurance, he becomes unruly.

Inefficiency is another pet theme of managers in industry. The systems of working, of course, are not devised by the workers. Since nothing is static and things change fast these days, soon these are found out-moded by those who have to do the work. But the managers except a few are too busy with other things to take a look into the state of affairs and effect changes where necessary. As a rule inefficiency results which is put on the worker but which rightly should go to the manager who usually does not favour any suggestions except in some organisations.

If bureaucrats and managers did a bit of self-criticism, they would find that much of what they call inefficiency and indiscipline is a direct cause of their actions and often failure to act in time. But perhaps that is too much to hope from them.

Clippings

Change In Bolivia

THE organisation of government which, according to official promises, is to be composed of revolutionary armed forces officers, the Central Workers Federation (COB), the San Andres University Revolutionary Committee, the Professional Workers Federation and the National Peasant Federation, has begun in Bolivia.

The new Government is headed by General Juan José Torres, 41, who was sworn in before a euphoric crowd of about forty thousand people who gathered spontaneously in Murillo Plaza to demand that the triumph of the pro-Torres officers be recognised as the victory of the people and that steps be taken to free Bolivia from foreign dependence and

place it on the road to large-scale political, social and economic transformations.

General Torres was to be sworn in a formal ceremony, but the people obliged him to take office before them.

In one part of his speech he said: "So that there will be no more treason, so that felony will never take hold of any national institution, we will further the alliance of the armed forces with the Bolivian people. We will build our nationhood on four pillars: the workers, the students, the peasants and the military."

The general opinion indicates that the victory of the pro-Torres officers was made possible by the general strike of workers, students and professionals. Faced with the strike, the military triumvirate created to succeed the former regime chief Alfredo Ovando left the Government palace in the dark of night, leaving the cadets' battalion on guard. But the cadets handed over the building to Colonel Samuel Gallardo, chief of operations and commanding officer of the Torres forces. Meanwhile, General Torres entered La Paz from the "El Alto" air base in the midst of extraordinary demonstrations of popular support and demands for a popular and democratic government. After Torres was sworn in, he withdrew to meet his military team to take precautions in the event of any military resistance.

The night before, General Fernando Sattori, head of the Air Forces and one of the members of the triumvirate, went to El Alto, where he resigned and joined Torres. But the people do not believe him and this morning assaulted his residence.

For their part, the popular organisations met in the university, where they resolved to ask for over fifty percent of the ministerial posts; the demand includes election of civilian ministers in popular assemblies. But it was reported that General Torres made another proposal which, according to some leaders, goes beyond popular expectations. It consists of the formation of a Cabinet with the equal participation of workers, univer-

sity students, peasants and the revolutionary military...

The workers and students are determined to swing this Government towards a programme of deep-going social significance. In reality, steps are already being taken in this direction. The National Federation of Press Workers, together with the "COB" and the students, seized the *El Diario* newspaper and at once turned it into a cooperative headed by a committee of journalists, other workers and students.

This city is filled with a climate of euphoria comparable only to the first days of the April 1952 process. The people are determined to use this opportunity to establish a government in keeping with their needs and aspirations.

(Oscar Pena, *Prensa Latina*, October 9).

* *

General Juan Jose Torres told *Prensa Latina* that his Government will indemnify the Gulf Oil Company because this is a commitment of the previous regime. He said that he could not say whether a political amnesty would include French intellectual Regis Debray until the new Cabinet is organised.

Torres told *Prensa Latina* that his Government is not of the "far left" but is nationalistic. The international policy of the revolutionary Government will be basically independent. It will broaden our diplomatic and commercial relations, always taking into account the principles of free determination of the peoples and non-intervention.

* * *

The Trade Union Congress, remembering the old days of its power after the 1952 "national revolution", demanded virtual co-government with the armed forces. The inevitable result was to frighten the anti-communist senior Army officers, trained in the United States.

The composition of the Cabinet has relieved foreign business circles who feared the "wild men" from the

tin mines and Marxist university students in ministerial posts. (*The Times*, October 15).

Sounds of Torture

The West Bengal Government has decided to inquire into allegations it has received from the public of police torture of Naxalites. Allegations from the public have reached the State Government recently that people near thanas cannot sleep at night because of wails coming from them. Reports have also reached the Government that in recent months an increasing number of students in Bhowanipore and Kalighat have joined the Naxalites. (*The Statesman*).

Stamp of Honour

The Greek Government has brought out a Gandhi postage stamp, reports UNI.

Prague Joke

A current joke in Prague is that this daily (*Rude Pravo*) contains truths, half truths and lies: the truths are on the sports page, the half truths in the meteorological columns and the lies everywhere else. (Dilip Padgaonkar in *The Times of India*).

The Parting Curse

BY A MUSIC CRITIC

THE Western opera form was imported by Tagore and adapted by him in *Valmiki-Pratibha* in 1881 and *Kalnrigaya* in 1882. But after *Mayar Khela* in 1888 he gave up experimenting with this musical form. After a lapse of almost half a century we find him again experimenting with a ballet-cum-opera form in 1931. *Shapmochan* was a rudimentary conglomeration of ballet, song and drama which did not culminate in a definite art form until 1934. *Chitrangada* of this period assumed the new form of dance-drama wherein the three elements viz., dance drama and music, fused into a cohesive synthesis. The poet gave it a

Workers Reopen Minerva

ABHIJIT MUKHOPADHYAY

THOUGH Calcutta boasts of so many active and dedicated theatre groups yet it must be said that, apart from only one, none of them is in control of a permanent stage. The affluent ones who can afford to pay exorbitant charges for the boards owned by moneybags are pulling on. Most of the others are fighting for their existence. The less is spoken of a National Theatre the better. The situation is bleak indeed, for nothing should be expected from a non-government which is busy enough repressing the people.

In this context it was brave of the workers of the Minerva Theatre, closed down suddenly by its erstwhile management the Little Theatre Group, some time ago, to have reopened the theatre with the production of *Angar*. At first they sought co-operation from the LTG but to no avail. Then last month they took up the challenge, according to a spokesman, to show that, despite the former management's indifference to the cause of the committed theatre and also to that of the workers' existence, dedicated efforts could ensure the survival of an old Calcutta theatre which was perhaps going to be turned into a godown. With a shoe-string budget and only ten days' preparation they did this. Half a dozen local groups came forward to take part in their endeavour collectively. Several others have extended their moral support.

Angar is a play on the hazardous lives of coalminers working in pits full of dangerous gas. Some of them are buried alive when the exits are sealed and the pits are flooded to save the mine from being blown up by the growing volume of gas. For obvious reasons one feels tempted to compare this production of the play with that of the LTG. Though this would be invidious, yet one thing should however be said—that as a

new name—dance-drama. It was a unique creation of Tagore since it had no prototype either in occidental or oriental music. The poet was naturally enamoured of this new form to the last days of his creative activity. Thus, the embryonic form of *Shapmochan* burst forth into the full blossom of *Chandalika* and *Shyama*.

Rabirirtha's announcement that it would stage a dance-drama version of *Vidayabhishap* (the parting curse) under the joint direction of Mr Dwijen Chowdhury and Mrs Suchitra Mitra at Rabindra Sadan some time ago naturally aroused general interest, particularly because no other composer had tried his hand at the dance-drama form after the death of the poet.

Dance-drama is a kind of music-drama where dance is apportioned a prominent role. But after seeing the nebulous song-dance-recitation version of *Vidayabhishap* we are sorry to say that the musical endeavour of Rabirirtha left the discerning audience deeply baffled. The adaptation of Tagore's dramatic poem failed to reach even the vicinity of dance-drama worth the name. First, the directors did not venture to compose a single song-dialogue which is a prerequisite of a real dance-drama; secondly, no new dramatic situation or character was innovated so as to infuse movement in the so-called dance-drama venture. Instead what was relied on was the recitation of the original *libretto* interspersed with a random selection of 22 love songs of Tagore (some of which were utterly inappropriate to the theme) accompanied by such corporal gestures and postures as pass under the name of modern dance, Calcutta style.

The chief point of argument between the leading characters of the

original poem—allegiance to personal love vs. allegiance to communal duty—could not be highlighted by the flash-back technique employed in the enactment with the aid of magic lighting. The whole business smacked of a commercial attitude. Evidently the directors are not possessed of that faculty which transforms a dramatic poem into a dance-drama for which composing song-dialogues is so essential. Briefly speaking, dance-drama is a full-fledged dramatic development of a theme unfolding through dialogue-songs and dances just as *Chitrangada*, *Chandalika* and *Shyama*. Mrs Mitra committed a greater blunder in imitating *Shapmochan* of 1931 when dance-drama was in the embryonic stage.

The *prima ballerina* of the play, Arati Majumdar as *Devayani Senora*, betrayed lack of a sense of dramatic action by remaining static when somebody was saying something to her. The troupe displayed poor control over choreography. In fact their mode of stopping was more akin to the Western system than to the Indian. The dancers could not create a single rhythmic ecstasy even in *dadra-kaharwa*. Other flaws were covered up in the darkness of the stage by the clever lightman.

There being an orchestra consisting of setar, esraj, tanpura, tarshana, flute and (lo!) the cello, it is not understood why the harmonium was allowed to emit such a discordant tone all the time, magnified by the megaphone. Of course it has been our experience that most of the singers of Tagore-songs feel almost like fish out of water without a close sight of the harmonium. How very sad indeed! It is also a matter of great curiosity why the girl friends of *Devayani* were so poorly attired.

Dramatic diversion and conflict having been negligible, the perpetually imploring heroine sounded so much like a nagging wife that even an ordinary mortal would have preferred her parting curse—not to speak of the son of the celestial preceptor. Better a parting curse than a constantly nagging song-dance or dance-song or whatever it was.

NOTICE

Next Week

THE SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE

By NEVILLE MAXWELL

OCTOBER 31, 1970

play *Angar* is not without flaws. Its occasional lapses into sentimentality prevent the audience from thinking of how to change radically the system controlled by the murderous mineowners. To present such a weak play on the stage the aural and visual aspects of the production have to be set at a high level. The workers' production, surprisingly enough, achieved this. It would not be fair to single out individuals, as the collective spirit is responsible for this achievement.

The workers of the Minerva Theatre have the determination to build a genuine committed group theatre against heavy odds. Their effort, however, can never be sustained by moral support alone.

Letters

Hungry Faces

It is the same story again. You can find them everywhere. On footpaths, in every street corner their hungry faces can be seen. The hope of our country, the kisans are begging for food again. It is like any other year. You cannot charge the government for this mishap. They are too busy with international peace and other big issues. You cannot charge the communists, Marxists and the socialists. They are busy with the question of election. What will happen to these haggard mobs is not the concern of any party. You can see in their hungry faces the dirty claws of famine. Dead Gandhi is protested by guns and the CRP. But living creatures, hundreds of men, women and children are unprotected from famine, hunger and death.

GAUTAM BHATTACHARYA
Calcutta

'Sweet Nonsense'

Whenever anybody tries to "dare to think and dare to act" all those interested in the status quo come

forth with stock excuses from the written texts as does Mr Sumanta Banerjee in his 'Marxism and Art' (*Frontier*, October 4).

It is not only by force that the exploiters rule the exploited. They also rule with sweet nonsense, if they can, like non-violence. This sweet nonsense is spread through statues, books etc. What Mr Banerjee forgets is that the destruction of books and idols is only symbolic action to wake the people from their ideological slumber. Now it can be seen that after the book burning and statue breaking the Naxalites have progressed to encounters with the repressive machinery of the State. So they have achieved what they wanted. Awaken the people and then with their help attack the enemy. This is not the time to discuss the niceties of what Marx said about culture.

M. N. D. NAIR
Trivandrum.

Release Debray

Delhi writers on behalf of the Writers' Front welcome the newly formed progressive revolutionary Government of General Juan Jose Torres in Bolivia. The Front sent an appeal for the immediate release of the French revolutionary intellectual Regis Debray, imprisoned in Bolivia for his revolutionary activities by the former rightist government there.

MUDRARAKHASA
RAMESH GAUR
BALRAJ MANRA
Delhi

Afro-Asian Meet

We take a very serious view of the mysterious and overnight emergence of a so-called "preparatory committee" for the purpose of holding the Afro-Asian Writers meet at Delhi in November. Without prejudice to the participating guest-writers, we disapprove the way some non-writers, along with outdated and washed-out writers, have been representing

Indian writing abroad. We have seen for quite sometime past their individualistic manoeuvrings in the literary field ending in profitable passports. We believe that they have been granted a handsome amount of money by the Government to demonstrate their extra-literary affluence in a posh hotel room and that they have evolved a disgraceful criterion of membership which is Rs 100 irrespective of any literary credit. We shall not allow this self-styled group of so-called writers, who have long since alienated themselves from the revolutionary struggle of the people and writers, to misrepresent Indian literature unless the whole affair is allowed to take a democratic shape. We demand that (1) financial resources backing the whole show should immediately be disclosed and the accounts be subjected to public inspection; that (2) the facts about the Lotus Award should immediately be made public, particularly why this award was given to Shri Bachchan, himself a member of the award committee; that (3) the present so-called "preparatory committee" should be declared an ad-hoc body pending the final election of office-bearers etc. in a general body meeting of writers to be called for the purpose irrespective of any fees; and that (4) the membership fee of Rs 100 should immediately be discontinued.

RAMESH GAUR, BALRAJ
MAHRAY, MUDRA-
RAKHASA, M. DEBRAY
V. KHARE, G. RABBI.
New Delhi

Our agent at Alipurduar

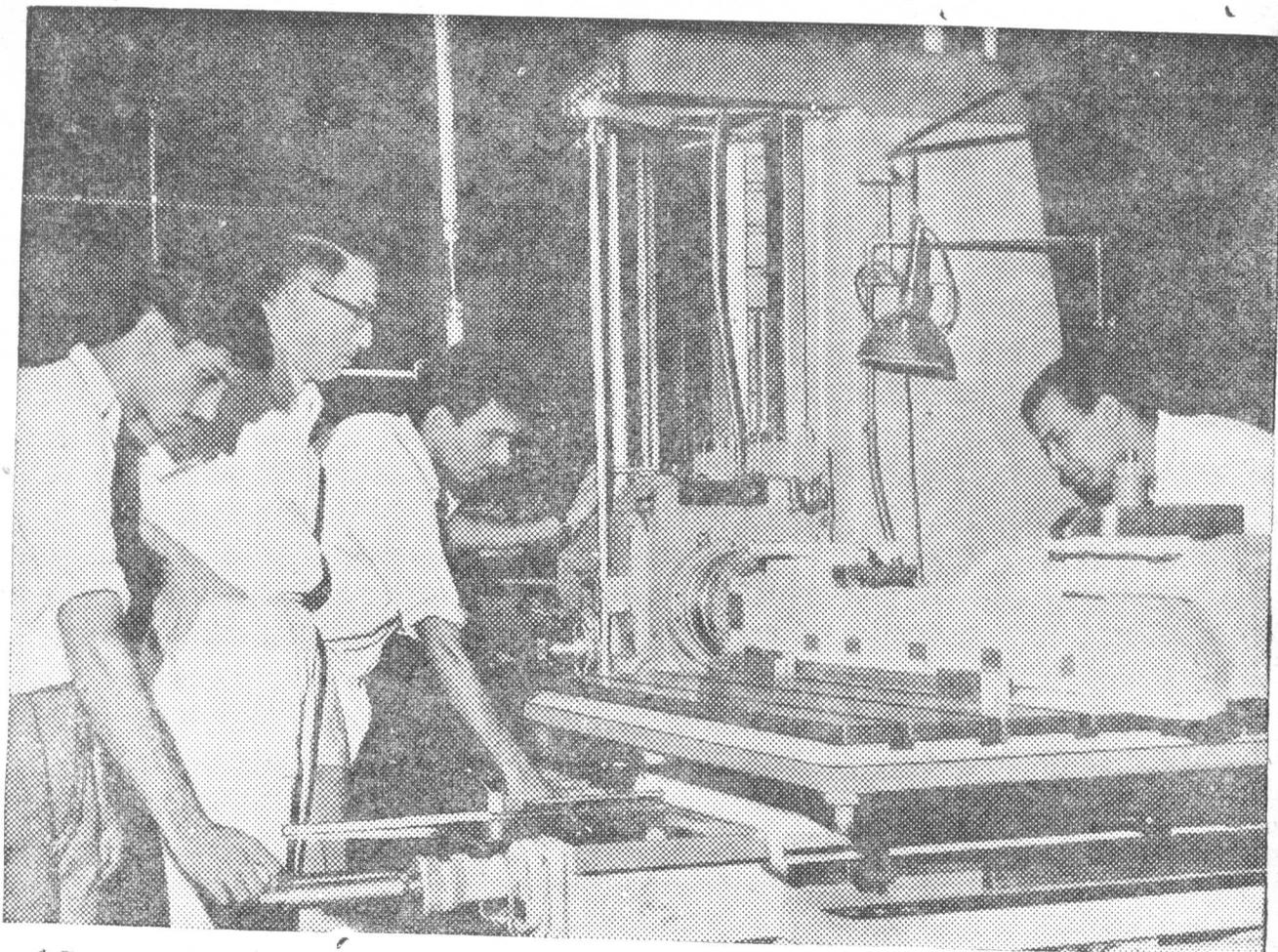
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•What is P.T.C.?

P.T.C. stands for "Prototype Production and Training Centre" at Okhla, New Delhi — one of many examples of Indo-German cooperation.

P.T.C. offers to Indian small-scale industries a complete package comprising training, technical and managerial advice, and actual design and production of tools that would not otherwise be available to them.

P.T.C. trains about four hundred draughtsmen, apprentices and graduate engineers every year, through a series of courses in theory, design, operation and construction of machine tools. All under the most exacting conditions of high-precision production lines. Trainees learn while they work. Nearly 2500 of them have already completed their courses.

P.T.C. designs and manufactures, with the help of its experienced and highly qualified personnel, a variety of products ranging from basic lathes to highly specialised machine tools.

P.T.C. also helps small-scale manufacturers to test and inspect their products, offers advice on product design, even on the preparation and execution of jobs.

P.T.C. has been set up jointly by the Governments of India and West Germany. It is one of a number of projects to develop small-scale industries in India. Its success is a pointer to the enthusiasm and ability small-scale industries have for growth and progress.

**INDIA AND GERMANY
PARTNERS FOR PROGRESS**



FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Tourism is the world's biggest industry...

... and the fastest growing !

Tourism is a Rs. 11,000 crore world business today. Roughly twice the size of the oil industry. In five years, it will be worth Rs. 18,000 crores ! An almost 75% increase.

Investment in tourism earns the most foreign exchange in the shortest time. For instance, Yugoslavia invested Rs. 38.3 crores in tourism in 1968 and earned Rs. 140.3 crores. A net profit of 250% ! And Spain could build two steel plants like Bhilai each year on her tourism earnings alone !

What about India ?

The number of visitors to India has increased. From 150,000 in 1964 to almost 245,000 in 1969. And our earnings from tourism have gone up to Rs. 33 crores in foreign exchange.

But in terms of world tourism, India got only one out of every thousand world travellers last year. Yet we have just about everything to make India the world's most attractive tourist destination.

What's missing here ?

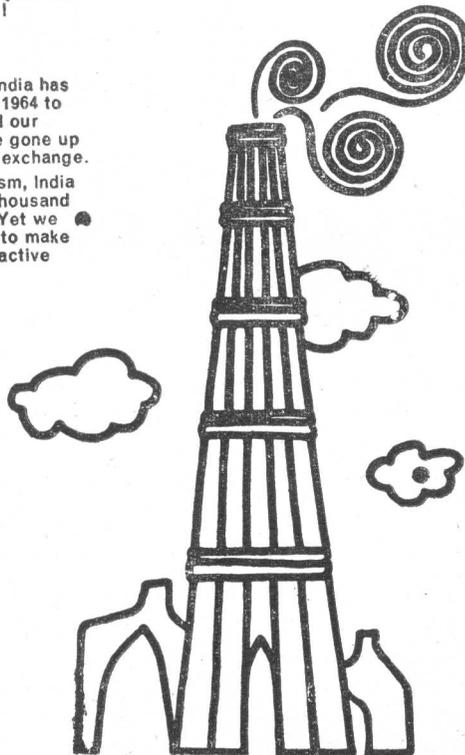
Nothing but broad-based public participation. And enough of what is known as the 'infrastructure' : hotel accommodation, transport facilities and tourist amenities. For instance, the city of Bangkok alone has more hotel beds suitable for tourists than the whole of India !

And when the Jumbo jets come, bringing many thousand more visitors our way, we shall need all these amenities in far greater measure.

What are we doing about it ?

The Government is actively involved in the building of new hotels, improving air and transport services, providing new and better tourist facilities.

But that is not enough. Because Tourism is everybody's business. It involves people at every level all over the country. So join us in our efforts. Let us give the tourist the amenities he needs and see that he goes home happy. Each happy tourist means so many more will come next year. Shouldn't be too difficult for us. Isn't ours one of the world's oldest traditions in hospitality ?



ASPT/11/1344

Department of Tourism
Government of India