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AFTER THE DELUGE

WHEN Mujibur Rahman insisted on elections despite the aftermath of the cyclone and tidal wave, he was not misunderstood by the people of East Pakistan. The heartless, shameless, utter indifference of the Pakistani bureaucracy to the stark tragedy, the fact that helicopters, transport planes and food stocks lay idle in West Pakistan while the British had even to bury the dead, that thousands of people lived without shelter, clothes, medicine and food for ten days and died while the affluent in the west had all their entertainment, called for a massive protest in the colony that is East Pakistan. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, on his return from the death areas, issued a statement in which he voiced the sentiment of East Pakistan for full autonomy and self-reliance and said that, election or no election, the people had already, in their hearts, voted for the assertion of the honour, separate existence and culture of Bangla Desh. There was no other major party in the field. The once massive National Awami Party, led by the dynamic but now pretty old Maulana Bhasani, is fragmented. The Maulana called the elections a farce and withdrew the very few candidates he had set up. Some other parties, not sure of themselves, followed suit. In the circumstances, the Awami League had a field day and the vast majority of the people of East Pakistan treated the elections as a plebiscite on self-determination and almost as a general strike against the performance of the military-bureaucratic complex of West Pakistan.

We have now a new Sher-e-Bangla, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. His Awami League spearheads the movement of the rising East Pakistan bourgeoisie for a separate voice in the running of the political and economic administration of their part of the country, which has been bled white by the western wing ever since 1947. In East Pakistan, there was no transfer of real power to the local entrepreneurs. Rich and resourceful men from the west, with the total support of a Punjabi-dominated Central Government, had usurped the reins of both economic and political power. The local entrepreneurs had to live a second-rate, almost comprador, existence. They took out licences and had to depend on West Pakistan for money. This utter disparity between the two wings had reduced the unitary concept to a farce and led to great upheavals from time to time. As a result of the sustained movement of 1969, Ayub Khan had to quit, but the old framework has continued under his successor. In East Pakistan the

confrontation with the Centre has been constant, real and vital, and not debased—yet—by so-called revolutionary politicians to achieve their opportunistic ends.

It remains to be seen how far the Sheikh, a Bengali bourgeois nationalist uncommitted to a social revolution, will or can go. Framing a constitution in itself will be a hard and bedevilling process. Even if the demand for full autonomy is met—it is indeed a very big if, even if one is a great optimist—other tensions, social and economic, will continue to gather momentum and disturb the country. Transfer of power to the people will perhaps need other leaders. We do not know whether the unity the students achieved in 1969 with the dispossessed in the cities has been extended to the countryside. It should be remembered that when the hungry peasants rose against the agents of the Centre in the villages—the Basic Democrats, the moneylenders, the hired thugs—reports were spread of a peasant march towards Dacca, the army took decisive steps and the Round Table Conference aborted the militant unity of the people.

The elections—the first to be based on adult franchise—though not an instrument for seizure of power, have served as a most significant public opinion poll. In terms of seats, though not in voting strength, the Islamic fanatics have suffered a severe defeat. Army and Air Force leaders, who thought they were mini-Nassers, have been cut down to size. In the west, the volatile Mr Bhutto, whom Comrade Ayub Khan and some of our comrades accused of collusion with the CIA, has emerged as the number one leader, though the odds against him were much tougher than they were against Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The young, born a few years before or after 1947, and fed up with old men and old ideas, must have been a considerable force in the elections. Was it the Pakistan Information Minister who said that Pakistan was a canal and elections are something like opening the

sluice-gates to clear the muck? Some muck is gone indeed.

It is quite on the cards that under the compulsions of getting into power, Mr Bhutto and Mr Mujibur Rahman will come to terms. Mr Bhutto wants a strong centre while Mr Rahman is not prepared to concede more than defence and foreign affairs to a federal Government. It is economic management that will be under contention and safeguards in this sphere will be sought by the ruling classes in the western units. Behind them will be the enormous weight of the Pakistan armed forces. Their ability to dictate terms in the decisive round will depend on whether the people stay alert and mobilised or dissipate their energies in euphoria, justified at the moment, and dreams of easy victory. So far as East Pakistan is concerned, there are other forces to keep Mujibur Rahman alert. The pragmatism that first thing should come first—six points and then eleven points and then—may not succeed. East Pakistan is ripe for a radical change. The geopolitics of this part of Pakistan are such that things can get telescoped.

In India, people are crowing over Mujib and are mighty pleased by his stand over full autonomy. Some of them are the same people who have been shooting the Nagas and Mizos for years and are in undying love with the earthly paradise. Some of them raised an outcry when a leftist party proposed a goodwill delegation to East Pakistan. However, let them crow. At a time of crisis, they are sure to urge the jackboots of India to go to the aid of the jackboots of Pakistan. Hypocrisy, alas, still hoodwinks people.

A Pointless Ritual

Gone are the days when bandhs were more than a formal protest by political parties, when the sullen mood of the people used to demonstrate the sanction behind the protest, when the privations of a bandh did

not matter because every bandh was an act of defiance. This militancy was taken out of the bandhs by the UF Government when it began to sponsor them from Writers' Building. Participation in bandhs became an act of conformism and not of defiance. For the UF parties such anaemic bandhs might have been politically necessary to show that they were different from the ruling party at the Centre; as a part of the Establishment, they could not resort to a more vigorous form of protest; they wanted to protest but were anxious that the Centre should not be embarrassed overmuch. Their ambivalence converted bandhs into extra holidays. Last week's bandh was no different, for taking the cue from its predecessor the present government chose not to put up even a semblance of opposition. It advised the Railways not to run their services and made no attempt to bring out the public transport vehicles. Maybe it did not want to risk a law and order problem as its plate is already full. But the fact remains that the contribution of the Government to the success of the bandh was no less than that of the bandh's sponsors; perhaps it is sheer modesty which prevented the Government from claiming its share.

The bandh has gone the way of its two predecessors this year. The first bandh was for a different reason; it had been called by the CPM to protest against the resignation of Mr Ajoy Mukherjee, and the majority of the other left parties had opposed it. But the other two bandhs, sponsored by all left parties, though not jointly, have been for practically identical reasons. Both were against collusion of the police with the vested interests and against police excesses. An additional reason for last week's bandh was the enactment of two Presidential Acts arming the State Government with powers of preventive detention and summary arrest for nondescript offences. In spite of the two "successful" bandhs, the CRP still stalk West Bengal and police excesses continue. In some respects, the police

have become more aggressive ; group arrests have been resumed, and young people of entire localities are being taken to police stations for interrogation and what not. That many of them are being released later shows that the sole purpose of the police is to harass and intimidate them. Police firing has perhaps become less lethal ; but the reason is that random killing has achieved its purpose. The Police Commissioner has advised his force not to act outside the law ; for certain actions which were illegal last month have been made perfectly legal by presidential decrees. The police can be generous now because of these legalised illegalities.

There is no doubt that notwithstanding last week's bands indiscriminate arrests will be made under the two Acts. If the arrests have not yet started in full swing, it is because the Government does not know the people whom it has decided to arrest. Powers of preventive detention were necessary because the arrests will be

made on the basis of hearsay. The police can now arrest people for imaginary offences ; what they are up against is whether they can arrest imaginary people for imaginary offences. The inexhaustible ingenuity of the police will solve the problem in time ; perhaps some paper work will be necessary to substitute real people for the imaginary—people who are unwary and unsuspecting because they are uninvolved. The bandh will not protect them ; nor will the left parties come to their aid, for their duty is already done. A showdown is possible only when the disputants set no limit to their actions. But for the left parties a bandh is the ultimate weapon ; they cannot think of any follow-up action, lest their loyalty to the constitutional path should become suspect, lest governmental action should be diverted in their direction. For them nothing can be more calamitous, especially when rumours of an early election refuse to be laid. The Government can now go ahead with its plan with tacit acquiescence of the left parties after the ritual protest. Only the non-salaried poor who have lost a day's earning still remember the bandh ; to others it has already become a non-event.

is a sine qua non in a developing economy. Two, rising prices are an incentive to higher production. Three, inflation can be kept within control by increased productivity.

Without questioning the basic validity of these shibboleths, it can be said that these do not operate in the present Indian economy. All the resources the Government had derived from continuous deficit financing through two decades had not been ploughed back in productive activities. Nearly half has been wasted on defence expenditure, bureaucratic corruption and inefficiency ; the other half has gone to inflate the private exchequers of Big Business who hoard and profit. A microscopic amount has gone to a lucky few villagers who come to city cinemas in their tractors and are photographed for Indian documentary films. The great mass of the Indian people, who pay for this deficit financing and for the developing paunch of businessmen, are going down and down. The National Sample Survey shows that during the last decade the number of agricultural labour living below the poverty line (Rs 15 a month) has doubled in a few States and risen three to four times in the rest. This, after four years of the Green Revolution. Prices conform to production only in utopian capitalism.

Statistics can be a big lie. But even statistics compiled by Government and quasi-Government institutions gives out the horrid truth of price rise, even if the experiences of the common people who face the price spiral are not enough.

The official wholesale price index stood at 182.3 at the end of October 1970. The base year of course is 1960-61 ; taking any other earlier base year would be producing more frightening figures ! Last year prices rose by 7.7 per cent. After four years of normal growth of production, alias the Green Revolution ! The revolution has not affected however the stagnant production of cash crops, shortages of which have been essentially man-made, Indian capitalist style.

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Prices In Search Of Money

Last week the Union Finance Minister silenced the critics in Parliament of the Government's price policy by a novel gesture ; he admitted that prices were rising and rising abnormally. The critics were satisfied and there the matter ended. The opposition did its duty by abusing the Government, and the Government did its duty by not losing temper or policy. The prices meanwhile are given a free scope for their natural movement upwards—natural within the system where a few fleece the country and where the country is duped by economic shibboleths. What are the shibboleths ? One, deficit financing

The Reserve Bank has its own analysis. Agricultural production has not shown the required rise, the foreign trade balance is deteriorating, the budgets provide for substantial deficits, deposit mobilisation is slackening, credit supplies from banks to people who are not especially prone to productivity are rising and the Government and Reserve Bank are furiously minting money at 12 per cent increase a year whereas the production rate in 1968-69 was 2.2 per cent. Hence the price rise.

The capitalists themselves are not happy at this naked rise of prices. The answer, they say, is more productivity which, again according to them, must be unencumbered by controls. The answer the common man would have thought of was productivity plus the severest cutdown on infructuous expenditure on corruption, wavering planning and on the defence budget. But the common man knows that New Delhi is not going to do what he wants it to do. The last two decades have been a chastening experience.

Jute Strike

Inscrutable is the attitude of the Government of India to the striking workmen in the sixty-five jute mills of West Bengal. Even the authorities confess that their demands are not unjustified. It is the recalcitrant millowners who are thwarting a peaceful solution of the problem. Yet the GOI refuses to shrug off its neutral pose and the stalemate goes on.

The strike is about ten days' old at the time of writing. A little over two and a half lakh workers downed their tools on an eight-point charter of demands. But later the differences narrowed down to three issues: bonus, gratuity and allowances to temporary hands. On the bonus issue, the millowners want to pay a month's wage and an ad hoc sum of Rs 30 but the workers are demanding Rs 25 more by way of ad hoc grant.

On the question of gratuity, the IJMA agrees, in principle, to the workers' demand but wants to refer it to a wage committee to spell out the details. The workers have refused to give in on this point. But the real hurdle to a solution appears to be the question of allowances to temporary workers. The employers are extremely reticent on this question.

It is well known that the industry enjoys the protection of New Delhi. It is liberally paid subsidies from the government exchequer; recently it has been granted a loan of Rs 45 crores for a programme of rationalisation. In view of this the millowners' plea that they are passing through rough weather is without foundation. Their profits have gone up and they have declared higher dividends this year. The crop prospect is also good. All in all, things point to good business this year as never before. Yet the millowners have consistently turned down demands for a minimally necessary wage rise and other benefits for the workers and have always maintained a feudal pose inherited from generations of belted earls. The GOI is unwilling to come to the aid of the jute workers.

The strike is being jointly sponsored by the INTUC, AITUC and CITU, the INTUC being the biggest partner. The union representatives have condemned the employers in chorus and they are equally critical of the GOI for its indifference. But the role of these unions and their representatives is not laudable either. They have repeatedly incited the workers to cease work for marginal gains only and have completely neglected their long-term political interest. The employers have used the situation to take help from public revenues. Temporary loss of production helps them; they pressurize the Government for subsidies and then dole out something to the workers. Fudged up in this vicious circle the workers groan and fight while their union representatives and the employers keep talking in the air conditioned rotunda in New Delhi.

Trouble In Spain

That General Franco would have nothing short of the firing squad for the Basque nationalists is quite in character. Three decades ago it was the same General who ordered hell to be let loose on the Basque nationalists of Guernica. Their crime was to have staked a claim to the autonomy of the four Basque provinces and fought in the ranks of the Republican Army against Franco's fascist war machine. But General Franco must be wondering what keeps the Basque flame burning. After the terrible years of the Civil War and massacre, young patriots again surfaced in 1956 to launch a movement for "Basque Homeland and Liberty" (ETA). And the movement continued to draw adherents out of sight of Franco's secret services until 1967 when the patriots sprang into armed action. They had meanwhile drawn on the lessons of China, Vietnam and Cuba and their goal too had broadened into a fight for socialism. Franco lost no time in launching a massive manhunt and after killing, imprisoning and maiming hundreds, confidently declared that the ETA had been eliminated. But after a year urban guerillas of the ETA burst into action liquidating, among others, the head of the political police of a Basque province. The mass torture and repression that followed, the 78-year-old dictator was surprised to discover, only helped to consolidate the movement.

But from the sharp reaction of the people all over Spain to the trial of 16 Basque nationalists that opened at Burgos early this month it was obvious that, more than a regional movement, the Basque struggle has become a focal point of popular opposition to the fascist dictatorship. In a country where strike is illegal 150,000 workers went on strike in protest against the Basque trial. Defying the proclamation of emergency in Basque province hundreds of students, artists and church people in the Basque country and across

Spain came out in demonstration. Never since the end of the Civil War had Franco faced such a serious opposition to his government. The refusal of the ETA to release the kidnapped West German Consul until the under-trial Basque prisoners are released has added further gravity to the challenge. To wilt before it would be opening the floodgates to the opposition but sticking to his guns he could expect hardly anything better at home and abroad. Already there are signs of a crack in his camp. The Francist bishops in Madrid, elements of the Army and even members of his Cabinet have started airing their misgivings about the court martial at Burgos, implicitly challenging the General who had so long successfully manipulated the disparate factions of the ruling *Movimiento Nacional*.

What in fact makes the Basque trial a very serious affair is that it has come in the wake of a steadily mounting worker-student challenge against Franco's Government. For the last three years students of Madrid university have been fighting for and to some extent have obtained the democratisation of the educational system—the first round in the fight for political democracy. In the backdrop of a stagnating economy, wage freeze and spiralling prices workers' unrest had spilled over the officially controlled trade union. There had sprung into existence a clandestine union of the workers—the Workers' Commission—and at its call in July there was a nationwide strike in Spain, unprecedented since 1939. Radical members of the church, opposed to the dictatorship and exploitation, have been making common cause with the militant workers and students. The possibility of all these streams of opposition now merging with Basque "extremism" to produce a torrent cannot but give the septuagenarian General sleepless nights.

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DECEMBER 19, 1970

Pakistani Elections—I

The Importance Of Being Mujib

ASHIM MUKHOPADHYAY

THE first and the most important phase of Pakistan's first general elections is over. The Awami League and the People's Party have emerged as the two victorious and vigorous political forces. The attention of the people now is concentrated on two things: one is the mystery behind the "surprising" results of the elections and the other is the future constitution and parliamentary government in Pakistan.

The victory of the Awami League in East Pakistan is no doubt outstanding but not surprising. The unprecedented cyclone of last November and the colossal damage it caused in the coastal region benefited the Awami League to a great extent. It had proved, for the party, a blessing in disguise. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the President of the Awami League, made the Government's failure to carry on systematic and speedy relief work in the devastated areas one of the principal themes of his election-propaganda. The people of East Pakistan who had long been suffering from the wanton misbehaviour and misrule of the army and bureaucracy of West Pakistan and therefore had become basically anti-west, once again saw, in the death of lakhs of their brethren, not a curse of nature but some sort of conspiracy of the West Pakistani ruling class against them. What Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who is by nature an excellent speaker, said while touring the affected areas and also at his press conference at Dacca on November 26, simply added fuel to the fire. At the press conference, attended by more than 200 native and foreign newsmen, he said that it was a sad reflection on the government that they ravaged people of Bangla Desh expected to survive only because of the generosity of the world community. "The generous

assistance received from abroad only underlines the tardiness and callousness of our own rulers. At a time when West Pakistan is enjoying a bumper wheat crop, it is ironic that the first consignment of food to reach us is from abroad". He went on: "While we have army helicopters sitting in West Pakistan, we had to wait for helicopters to come from the other end of the world. Is this why we have channelled 60% of our budget all these years for defence services?"

"All decisions of consequence are made in Rawalpindi or Islamabad. All powers rest in the Central Government and its bureaucrats. It is they whom I accuse today of criminal neglect and discrimination against Bangla Desh, which has made us too vulnerable a prey to every vagary of nature.... Rs 20 crores could not be found in ten years for building cyclone-proof shelters, yet over Rs 200 crores could be found for building those monuments of luxury and waste in Islamabad. Before a plan for flood control could be prepared (for Bangla Desh) over \$ 1 billion could be allocated for building the Mangla and Tarbela dams in West Pakistan. We are confirmed today in our conviction that if we are to save the people of Bangla Desh, we must attain full regional autonomy on the basis of the six-point formula. We must have plenary powers to manage our economy.

"The feeling now pervades not just our towns and the educated but every village, every slum, that we must rule ourselves. We must make the decisions which matter. We must decide where to raise money. We must decide how our funds will be used. We will no longer suffer the arbitrary rule of the bureaucrats, the capitalists and

the feudal interests of West Pakistan. We have had enough of a strong Centre. We have had enough of crimes committed in the name of national integration.

"If the polls are frustrated, the people of Bangla Desh will owe it to the millions who have died to make the supreme sacrifice of another million lives, if need be, so that we can live as a free people and so that Bangla Desh can be the master of its own destiny."

Bengali Nationalism

The Central theme of this press statement is very straight and clear. In it Sheikh Mujibur Rahman earnestly tried to intensify the spirit of Bengali nationalism of the East Pakistanis against the West Pakistani ruling elements. He used the natural disaster against the ruling government by explaining the latter's callousness and inefficiency as the primary cause of the former's rapid extension. This he again explained as a government conspiracy to postpone the polls and reminded the people that the elections and the Six Point Programme were the two musts for them.

Besides his speeches in the affected areas of the coastal East Pakistan and his statements at press conferences in different cities, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman also published a large number of booklets in which he accused the government of neglecting relief work among the survivors of the devastated areas and described this negligence as a plot to increase chaos and confusion in the province which would ultimately lead to the postponement of the elections for the second time.

The cyclone had proved a watershed and it greatly influenced the election results. The decision of the National Awami Parties (the left NAP is led by Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani and the right by Muzaffar Ahmed) and the Progressive National League of Aatur Rahman Khan

to boycott the polls was, as explained by their leaders, mainly due to the devastation caused by the cyclone. These leaders publicly declared that their first and foremost task would be to help the distressed survivors and not to contest the polls. The Awami Leaguers and also some political observers both inside and outside the country said that the NAPs and the PNL were indulging in mere stunts to avoid inevitable defeat at the hands of the Awami Leaguers. Yet there was some truth in the former's declaration to boycott the polls. Men like Maulana Bhasani, Haji Mohammed Danesh, Hatem Ali Khan have sacrificed much for their country; they are among the handful of political leaders whose sacrifice and love for the nation are still beyond doubt. Be that as it may, the decisions of the NAP and the PNL made the path of the Awami League much smoother. Bhasani's NAP was to stand from fifteen constituencies, Muzaffar's NAP from thirty-five, Aatur Rahman's PNL from 13. Soon after the declaration of these three parties at the joint meeting at the Paltan Maidan on November 23, their workers and sympathisers were in utter frustration. Although Muzaffar's NAP ultimately changed its decision and decided to go to the polls, it was too late—the clever and quick Awami League had meanwhile managed to win over the people to its side. The absence of Bhasani's NAP and Aatur Rahman's PNL, and the vacillation of Muzaffar's NAP made the victory of the Awami League a foregone conclusion in at least 63 constituencies (Bhasani NAP 15, Muzaffar NAP 35, PNL 13).

The cyclone helped the Awami League in another way. Presence of foreign troops in the coastal areas of East Pakistan was described by the League and almost all political parties as a conspiracy to frustrate the long awaited polls and keep East Pakistan under the permanent subjugation of the military junta.

If in the near future, the massive

victory of the League puts President Yahya Khan in an embarrassing position, it is the President himself who will be responsible. By allowing foreign troops to start relief operations in the cyclone-stricken areas he had indirectly helped the politicians, especially Mr Mujibur Rahman, to get an upper hand over him.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his followers also created distrust in the minds of the voters against the Islam oriented political parties by connecting them with the reasons for the slow relief operations. As most of these parties' headquarters are in West Pakistan, they have but very few followers in the eastern region. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has always been aware of it and exploited it at a very opportune moment. The failure of the Central Government which is situated in the western wing to cope with the situation had already made the people more anti-west, and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman reaped a good harvest from it by indirectly inducing the people to suspect that these pro-west parties had connived at the conspiracy of the pro-west government. His press statement shows how effectively he had managed the issue. He said: "Where are those pillars of national integration, those self-appointed apostles of Islam, Maulana Maudoodi, Khan Qayyum Khan, Mian Mumtaz Daultana, Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan and other West Pakistan leaders today?" The defeat of the Council Muslim League, the Qayyum Muslim League, the Jamaat-i-Islami etc. was not due to the fact that masses in East Pakistan have become basically anti-Islam but because Mr Rahman's handling of the "cyclone" issue made them more anti-west. I have received a letter from Dacca dated November 29 in which my friend comments: "This cyclone will make Sheikh Sahib a king."

No Match

The Pakistan Democratic Party, the Convention Muslim League, the Council Muslim League, the Qayyum Muslim League and the Jamaat-

YOJANA

(ENGLISH FORTNIGHTLY)

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i-Islami were thus no match for the Awami League. True, they pointed and distributed costly pamphlets, organised meetings under richly decorated pandals, showered money among starving villagers and in some places opened free kitchens, but they lacked the organisational strength and popularity of the Awami League. Their propaganda technique was rather backdated, blunt and unrealistic. In their eagerness to impress the voters by catchy slogans like "Save Islam" or "Islam should be the goal of your life" they forgot that the voters are becoming more conscious. These political parties learnt no lesson from the defeat of the Muslim League in East Pakistan in the elections of 1954 when also, the Muslim League, in spite of its maladministration, expected votes in the name of Islam. The appeal to Islam in such a crude manner got no response from the rising middle class. Within the last four months preceding the December 7 elections three Pakistani journalists told this author that though they had faith in Islam they did not like any excess. The Islam loving parties could not sway the educated and sensitive middle class with their fanatical programmes. For instance, the Jamaat-i-Islami, demand to make the Quoran and the Sunnat the chief sources of law, to introduce the Namaz and the Haz and the teaching of the Islami-Akida in educational institutions up to the secondary level, proved too much for them. It was almost certain that the excess and exuberance shown for Islam by these political parties would ruin them in the polls. "These people are riding a tiger which will soon eat them up," this author commented in *Saptahik Basumati* (Calcutta, 5-11-1970).

It did. See the following tables.

Table 1

Partywise break-up of candidates for National Assembly seats in East Pakistan.

Awami League	.. 162
Convention Muslim League	88
Pakistan Democratic Party	77
Qayyum Muslim League	.. 66
Jamaat-i-Islami	.. 64
Council Muslim League	.. 48

Elections have been postponed in nine constituencies because of the cyclone.

TABLE 2

Elections Results	
Awami League	.. 151
(out of 153 seats)	
Pakistan Democratic Party	1
Qayyum Muslim League ..	0
Jamaat-i-Islami ..	0
Council Muslim League ..	0
Convention Muslim League	0

Raja Tridib Roy won from the Chittagong Hill Tracts region as an independent candidate.

The only parties which, in spite of their inferiority to the Awami League, were still expected to give the former stiff opposition were the NAPs of Maulana Bhasani and Muzaffar Ahmed. Even after the split of 1967-68 these two factions enjoyed some reputation and good will in both the wings of Pakistan and even their first and foremost rival, the Awami League, also acknowledged their contribution in the last anti-Ayub movements of 1968-69. But since the middle of 1969 both these NAPs had been riven by inner conflicts and disintegration. Mohammad Toaha, General Secretary of the Bhasani faction and President of the Purba Pakistan Sramik Federation, resigned his offices; so did Abdul Huq, Secretary of the Purba Pakistan Krishak Samity. They have now formed a new organisation, the East Pakistan Communist Party, and decided to capture power through peasant revolution. Their weekly paper *Ganashakti* preaches almost the same philosophy as professed by the CPI(ML) of Mr Charu Mazumdar. Abdul Matin, one of the conveners of the historic language movement of February 21, 1952 in East Pakistan and an old guard of Maulana Bhasani, has also left the NAP. Rashed Khan Menon, Kazi Jafar and Hajdar Akbar Khan Rono, three very promising and young leaders of the NAP, have deserted the Maulana

and set up the coordination committee of the Revolutionary Communist parties of East Pakistan. Their desertion had made the NAP almost impotent. Since the departure of Mohammad Toaha, the Sramik Federation has been split into three rival groups. Ill-feeling between Rashed Khan Menon and Abdul Matin had broken the unity of the pro-Bhasani Students' Union. It is now split into two groups. The Krishak Samity which had existed until the first half of this year as the only semblance of unity between the two NAPs, is now in a moribund state because of the absence of Abdul Huq.

Another difficulty which the Maulana at present considers the greatest is the rivalry between Mujibur Rahman (Jadu Mian), the newly elected General Secretary of the Party, and Anwar Jahid, the Treasurer.

The NAP of Muzaffar Ahmed has also been suffering from some inner conflicts, although Muzaffar Ahmed had never had the bitter experience of Maulana Bhasani and therefore could consider himself luckier than the latter. In spite of protests from his followers, Mr Ahmed often made proposals for an election alliance with the Awami League and the latter interpreted it in such a way that the people became convinced that perhaps the Muzaffar NAP had become weak and so sought the League's help to survive. Messrs Mohiuddin Ahmed, Motia Chowdhury, Saifuddin Manik etc. had criticised the actions of Muzaffar Ahmed and accused him of reducing the party to the position of an "alliance beggar".

Yet, according to some political observers, the results of the polls might have been somewhat different had there been any united opposition of the two NAPs to the Awami League.

As things were, the rapid disintegration of both the NAPs, disunity

among the workers of the Krishak Samity and the Sramik Federation greatly helped the Awami League to win over the peasants and workers to its side. The peasants and workers, who are still at the lowest rung of the social ladder and always need some sort of protection either from the government or from a strong political party, were greatly shocked by the split in the Krishak Samity and the Sramik Federation. Therefore when Mujibur Rahman approached them with his strong Bengali nationalism and promises of a bright future, these leaderless, neglected people sang "Jai Bangla".

What has been the role of the Awami League? In the first half of its life, that is in the pre-Ayub days, it had two achievements: it helped to form the United Front and the latter defeated the Muslim League in the elections of 1954. It managed to pass the Joint Electorate Bill of 1957, which was no doubt a great step towards democracy. But for these two achievements, the rule of the Awami League at that time was both dull and discouraging. Once, during its rule, floods and famine made the masses helpless, many people died of starvation. It is interesting to recall that the first relief to reach them was from the USA and not from the Awami League government.

Agartala Conspiracy

At the initial stage of the anti-Ayub movement during 1963-64, the Awami League Convener, Mr H. S. Suhrawardy, formed the National Democratic Front or the NDF, but that he did in his personal capacity and not as the chief of any organisation, because at that time all political parties remained banned. When the movement started in full swing, the Awami League could not participate in it wholeheartedly because its chief source of strength, Mr Mujibur Rahman, was arrested on May 8, 1966, then released for a few hours on the night of January 18, 1968 and again arrested un-

der the Defence of Pakistan Rules. Thus began the Agartala Conspiracy Case or the "State versus Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Case". The case was withdrawn on February 22, 1969.

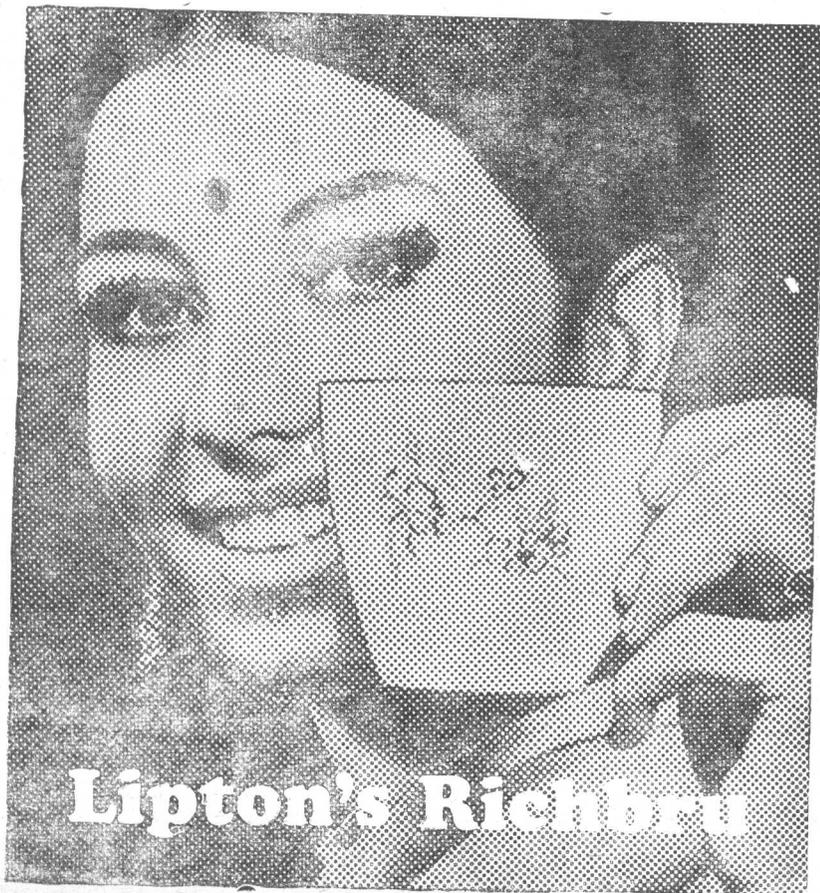
During these two years many ups and downs took place in Pakistan. It was not the Awami League but the Pakistan Democratic Party of Mr Nurul Amin, the two NAPS, the PPP of Mr Bhutto and various student, peasant and labour organisations which took the actual lead in the movement. The League was lying helpless and indisciplined. Fortunately, leaders like Amina Begum (now with the PNL of Ataur Rahman Khan) and Tofael Ahmed were there and thanks to their hard and sincere labour the League managed to survive. It should also be taken into account that the demand of full provincial autonomy for East Pakistan which is the central theme of the League's Six Point Programme (the programme was born on February 13, 1966) had been put forward al-

most a decade ago by the rebel group of the then League, which ultimately formed the NAP in July, 1957 with Maulana Bhasani as its President. Even the NDF, PDM and the DAC, or the Democratic Action Committee supported the demand of autonomy for East Pakistan with some reservations. It should also be noted that almost all political parties, including the conservatives had in their programmes some demands for provincial autonomy and therefore it will not be wise to consider the League as the sole champion of the autonomy issue. Finally, the 11 Point Programme (May, 1967) jointly accepted by the Students' Union (the student organisation of the NAP, then undivided) and the Students' League (student organisation of the Awami League) is more elaborate and progressive than the Six Point Programme. Even Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had admitted it publicly. He said that his programmes were included into the

11 points and he was ready to suffer further imprisonment for the cause (his speech at the public reception accorded to him at the Dacca Race Course on February 23, 1969).

But if the contribution of the Awami League in the peak hours of the anti-Ayub movement was nothing extraordinary and if Mr Mujibur Rahman's Six Point Programme cannot be described as the first formula to end disparity and achieve full autonomy for East Pakistan, what is the secret of his popularity, what is the secret of his success?

Truly speaking, there is no myth or mystery behind Mujibur Rahman's success. Unlike his rivals he is always alert and conscious about the ever changing times and has the capacity to adapt himself. Moreover he knows well what harvest he would reap by sowing what seed. That is why when the NAPs were crying for Moscow or Peking oriented socialism and the conservative parties like the Jamaat-i-Islami and



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LIPTON'S MEANS
GOOD TEA

LRC-5

the three Muslim Leagues were demanding revival of the dead Arabic Khilafat, the Awami League stood firm in its belief in the indigenous concept of Islam. Mujibur Rahman realised that in Pakistan where the vast majority are still illiterate and where people are born and brought up in a mode of life which is entirely "Pakistani" by nature, nothing from Moscow or Peking or Arabia will receive a satisfactory response. Here lies one major cause of his success. He asked them to accept the socialism of East Pakistan and not that of Russia or China. As a result, the common Pakistani, who still believed in some sort of isolation, did not like to waste his precious vote on a socialist or Khilafati candidate whom he began to consider as a mere adventurer. It is one of the causes of the defeat of the Muzaffar NAP in East Pakistan. Secondly, although the anti-west feeling was still alive among the East Pakistanis, none except Mujibur Rahman concentrated on it. The NAP, PDM and the various student organisations, except the Students' League, considered it as provincialism and diverted their energy and attention towards what they thought more important. But Mujibur Rahman did not budge an inch from his standpoint. He understood that there was at least one point where Bengalis from every walk of life would surely unite: that is they are Bengalis and therefore one nation and a nation of seventy million could not remain under the subjugation and a nation of seventy million Mujibur Rahman continued to hammer on this point. When the Agartala Conspiracy Case began and the Government charged him for his attempt to separate East Pakistan from the West, the common people of East Pakistan began to consider him as their hero. Since then Mujibur Rahman and Bengali nationalism have become synonymous to them. The reception which Mujibur received after his release had not been accorded to anybody in the past.

(To be concluded)

Assam

Crisis Of The Middle Class

MSP

SINCE early November, politics in Assam seems to be all sweetness and light, smiles and felicitations. The new Chief Minister has hardly let a day pass without being formally felicitated by some organization or other on his elevation to the *gadi*. The numerous functions got up by various organizations, citizens' committees, groups representing different interests suggest not merely elaborate and careful organization of 'popular' enthusiasm, but also that the new Chief Minister has a mass base, of sorts.

How is the future going to shape under Mr Mahendra Mohan Chowdhury? Here, I will not concern myself with genuine mass movements leading to some sort of radical political change that is in the offing, or at least one hopes is in the offing. There are plenty of things to be agitated about; land hunger, unemployment, rising prices, the whole dreary and familiar list. My concern here is not with any analysis of how these problems are going to be highlighted and what solutions are going to be sought by the Left in Assam. Rather, how will the Congress under its new leader face the growing economic crisis in Assam? Briefly, the answer might be that a 'diversionary' technique is going to be employed by the new leader. Mr Chowdhury brings with him a wealth of experience in manipulative politics, which he has already employed to his advantage, first, in successfully defying that supreme manipulator at New Delhi, and later, in selecting his team. Particularly adroit has been his selection of the Muslim Ministers. It seems his overwhelming concern was to keep Mr M. H. Chowdhury out. There is no doubt that in

many Hindu minds, Mr M. H. Chowdhury is almost a bogeyman. And on the face of it, it is rather difficult to see why it is so, why such frantic efforts were to be made to keep him out of the Ministry. He was of course in the Muslim League, but so were some others who are in the new Cabinet. Long ago, he was held under the P.D. Act, no doubt; but that surely can't make him 'dangerous', and anyway the man who got him arrested (Mr Bishnuram Medhi) later took him into his own Cabinet. There is no doubt that he is among the very few really able politicians of Assam, and given the chance, he could even teach Mr M. M. Chowdhury something in manipulative politics. It is probably this sheer ability that has kept him out of the Cabinet. Bengali, Muslim Leaguer, 'security' risk, colluder with Pakistani 'infiltrators'—all these could have been forgiven, but not intelligence and manipulative skill. A wise prince should never surround himself with counsellors better informed than himself.

The new Chief Minister has started with plenty of advantages. In some ways, he is even considered a bit of a hero for his successful defiance of New Delhi, and not all the felicitations are entirely stage-managed. One can also easily foresee how the 'diversionary' tactic mentioned earlier is going to be employed. There is a lot of general anger against New Delhi prevailing in Assam now, and the new Chief Minister can be expected to make the best use of this anger, particularly that variety of anger felt by the middle classes. The point I am trying to make needs to be clarified. There is no doubt that New Delhi, as symbolised by Mrs Gandhi, is quite unpopular here. But the anger of the middle classes needs to be distinguished, for there is nothing genuinely political in the anger; hardly any ideology is involved. The last time Mrs Gandhi was here, she was rather imperious and tended to dismiss every opposition to her as merely an indication of the 'chauvinism' of the

people here. The announcement about the second public sector refinery in Assam was cleverly hedged in with an odd choice for the location of the refinery; the cleverness of the move only caused more irritation and frustration. Then came the acceptance in principle of Meghalaya's demand for full statehood, and the really remarkable discovery Mrs Gandhi made in Parliament, while refuting opposition charges that the announcement was made to settle scores with Mr M. M. Chowdhury. The only 'dangerous' trend she discovered in Assam, Mrs Gandhi informed Parliament, was that represented by the slogan 'Assam for Assamese'. (*The Statesman*, November 12, 1970)

A Crisis

The middle classes in Assam, particularly that section which has long enjoyed political power, are now facing a crisis. Having long been accustomed to unquestioned exercise of power over a wide variety of people, they are now faced with the prospect of the loss of this power, or at least the prospect of having to share it with other sections of the same class. In the past decade, this class has been subjected to much frequent and severe attacks from a variety of quarters, on a variety of points. (Be Good. Don't be chauvinistic. Take more Bengali refugees. Do not protest if your land is occupied by immigrants who are more productive. Do not complain if your land is acquired by the Government and you don't get jobs in the establishment that now occupies the land which you once cultivated. Don't complain about exorbitant prices. Don't... Don't...) Mrs Gandhi's latest lecture seems to be the last straw. For long, these attacks were mainly from outside, from Delhi, Calcutta. But of late, there have been attacks from within, and other sections of the middle class, other minority groups, are also showing increasing signs of restiveness. Viewed from a long range perspective, what is happening in Assam now is a divestment of power which has long

been wielded by a section of the middle classes. Now other sections of the same class are also demanding a share of the spoils. It is because of a lack of basic difference among the various warring sections that we find such bon homie among the leaders. The new Assam Cabinet has shown how extreme forms of Hindu and Muslim

communalism, Assamese and Bengali chauvinism, can conveniently co-exist, provided a common mediocrity was shared. I do not know if our new Ministers have read T. S. Eliot, not to speak of Baudelaire; but looking at each other, they might as well exclaim, "You hypocrite lecteur—mon semblable,—mon frère!"

Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

THE Birlas have been in West Bengal for so many generations that, had it been some independent country in the West, say Great Britain, instead of being a part of India, they would by now have become legally Bengalis to carry on their business smoothly, if for nothing else. But we being all citizens of one country, no such thing is necessary, nor in fact is it possible at least for the vast majority of caste Hindus.

Mr B. M. Birla's concern for the unemployed Bengalis, therefore, may just be due to his family's association with this unhappy State or even some vague feelings of remorse at the condition to which it has been reduced as a result of exploitation over the decades in which the Birlas have played a leading part. One should not look a gift horse in the mouth; but then one should be certain that it is not a Trojan horse one is bringing inside.

The capacity of the Birlas to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds has been demonstrated in the past and merits admiration of sorts. It was one of the Birlas who was the first industrialist from India to go over to Soviet Russia to try for a business deal. It was again the Birlas who took up a project in Red Kerala and flaunted this in the face of the Communists in West Bengal against the charge that they were against the United Front.

Mr B. M. Birla has now come out as a champion of unemployed Bengali

youths and reportedly instructed all his concerns to give them preference in employment. Not content with this, he has been going around asking his friends and relations who are in business to do the same. All this of course is fine and may win Mr Birla some friends who are easily pleased. But some awkward questions remain unanswered.

The plain fact, of course, is that very few jobs are being created and so the question of their being filled up by this or that group is just so much eyewash. It would have been interesting if Mr Birla had at the same time told us how many jobs were going to be filled up in the next year. Surely, that is not a thing which is so difficult to say. Modern industry does not just wake up one fine morning and discover that it requires a few hundred men. So, in the absence of this we must painfully come to the conclusion that it is just one of those pious wishes designed to draw a red herring across the burning trail of mounting resentment against unemployment amongst Bengali young men.

For another thing, it is not such a disinterested action as it might seem. The businessmen and industrialists have nothing to lose but something to gain by employing Bengalis wherever they offer themselves. The time when white-collar workers from outside were less militant than the local youth is a thing of the past. Also, they are not prepared to work

for less. In any case, with wages fixed, the question does not arise in big farms. Moreover, they have learnt to rely more on joint action with their colleagues than on individual currying favour with the bosses.

As for industrial workers, a large proportion of them still come from outside the State. A conscious Bengali working class is yet to develop. Most of them go on fighting a losing battle against being declassed, and think of themselves as *bhadralok* fallen on evil days and hoping for good times to return. Due to partition and impoverishment of the State they have nothing but their jobs to depend upon. On the other hand their counterparts from upcountry have more often than not still maintained their links with the land; they usually keep their families in their native States and in case of strikes and lockouts have greater staying power than the local men.

If the composition of the labour force can be changed materially in favour of the local population, the industrialists have nothing to lose and everything to gain. They will be able to bargain from a position of strength against opponents who will be weaker than before.

And with this carrot of jobs for local youths, it may not be impossible to drive a wedge into the fragile unity of the workers.

* * *

Blessed are the meek in Calcutta, for they shall inherit the city, barring accidents, for the police are the new guardian angels looking after the citizens. The police are trying to be all things to all people. To the so-called anti-socials they are a terror. But to others they can be angels of mercy. They stand by while Shri Ajoy Mukherjee asks non-violent Gandhians to take up whatever arms they can get hold of and fight. They even do not mind going along with processions shouting for withdrawal of the CRP.

Apparently with the changed times, they do not even mind ordinary in-

fringements of the law or perhaps it is no longer necessary to harass rice-sellers and other hawkers and pavement pedlars for a little extra cash. In any case they are being left free to carry on their miserable trades.

A special windfall has been to young lovers who can now be seen in parks and other open spaces cuddling up in the best tradition of Western countries, free from the moral guardianship of the police in the past. Or maybe the police think young men and women thus engaged

are at least free from the Naxalite influence.

In their own way, of course, the police in Calcutta have always been a big patron of sports even if it was mostly to wield the baton or charge the spectators, on horseback. They are now offering young men, provided they run apolitical clubs, sports gear and even milk bread to be distributed free to the poor.

Truly, we are on the way to a real police raj, where everything is in the hands of the police...

Dialogue With South Africa—II

A. K. ESSACK

HOUPOUET-Boigny has shielded himself behind the Lusaka Manifesto of 1969 for his dialogue of betrayal. But he had nothing to do with its formulation and was not there when it was discussed by the 12 heads of States of East and Central Africa and later in the OAU. Nevertheless he seized this document and tabled it at the U.N. for acceptance. The speed and zeal with which he acted is in contrast with the callous indifference to the fate of the oppressed people in southern Africa—here was an issue emanating from Africa which could serve his masters well. And his masters indeed had shown pleasure. The far-sighted organ of the American financiers, the *New York Times*, had published the Lusaka Manifesto in full. Yost, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., had praised it warmly and Nixon in his annual address to the Congress described it as "statesmanlike document." There is no need to say that the French were delighted.

Hardly a year has elapsed and the Lusaka Manifesto like the Bible and the Quoran has been quoted to justify foul deeds and villainous practices. The Manifesto does propose a dialogue and a peaceful road, but on one condition—that the powers concerned accept the principle of self-determination and equality. As the *Na-*

tionalist editorial pointed out, peaceful possibility was based on a basic precondition. The precondition was that South Africa should declare its acceptance of human equality and dignity regardless of race. And because this precondition has not been accepted, none of the 13 countries which accepted this Manifesto (Malawi had abstained) now endorsed Houphouet-Boigny. Africa has further tightened the screws and the latest dastardly act was to place under house arrest those who have been twice declared innocent by the courts of the land under the notorious "Terrorism" Act. They had been in detention already for 20 months.

The OAU summit and the non-aligned Conference of 61 States and national movements held in September 1970 in Addis Ababa and Lusaka showed a new spirit. These conferences not only condemned the racist powers, but also imperialism for supplying arms to South Africa and came out fully in support of the armed struggle waged by the people of Indochina, Palestine, and Southern Africa. Under the new conditions then what does this dialogue amount to? Firstly Houphouet-Boigny has acted unilaterally without consulting the OAU. The significance of his betrayal can only be under-

stood if we remember that in the sixties the African States acting in concert effectively isolated South Africa diplomatically, economically and culturally. South Africa was expelled from the Olympics because of its colour bar policy in sports. Now Houphouët-Boigny in following Banda has struck at the solidarity and unity of the OAU.

But the aim is much wider. It is to disrupt the OAU and liquidate the armed phase of the struggle amongst the national liberation movements. Imperialism realises that if the OAU cannot be captured, then it must be disrupted. And in the mean time alternative organisations, to rival the OAU are being mooted. A correspondent of the *Nationalist* reported that immediately after the Conference (of the non-aligned) moves were made to form an association of African States committed to the West which Malagasy could also join. This group could cooperate economically and consult each other politically. This is precisely the anti-communist front which Vorster proposes to establish in the southern African common market.

Opening a dialogue with South Africa has its own logic. Malawi opened with such a dialogue and has now ended as a neo-colonial State of South Africa. And if a dialogue is opened, on the acceptance of apartheid, South Africa will insist that freedom fighters be denounced as terrorists and hounded out, some thing which Houphouët-Boigny has already done, in the Ivory Coast. At the time of writing three OCAM members and Liberia have rejected Boigny's overtures. These are Congo-Brazzaville, Cameroons and Senegal. President Ahidjo of Cameroons said, "What dialogue can one engage in with a partner who rejects in advance the principle of equality between men and refuses to make any concessions on apartheid policy?" And a Minister in Senegal said, "There is no question in any way of engaging in a dialogue with a racist government, for apartheid makes racism a dogma,

a sort of religion". This reveals a split in the OCAM. Now even Bongo of Gabon is having second thoughts about being led by Houphouët-Boigny.

Other Moves

But if the moves of these pawns have been exposed and checked, other moves are certainly afoot. Imperialism might retreat here and there, but it will not give up its plans for a reconquest of Africa. It is in this light that one must move to settle the domestic differences between Smith and Heath, so that they could be a homogeneous white block, backed by imperialism, which could be used as a springboard to reconquer Africa.

The grim reality is that for the first time since the conquest of Africa imperialism is in danger of losing Africa. The granting of independence to the colonies in Africa did not alter the balance of power on the continent. The levers of political, economic and military control were still in the hands of the former imperial powers. But in the late sixties it was becoming clear that imperialism was losing grip. The trend in Africa as elsewhere in the world was revolution. And this within the African context expressed itself in three ways.

Firstly, there was the rise of the national liberation movements which had embarked on the road of armed struggle. From humble beginnings, they were yet able to build armed forces through guerilla warfare. Thus 200,000 Portuguese soldiers have been pinned down and are forcing this poverty-stricken country to vote half of its budget to "Defence". The armed forces of the liberation organisation have grown up to over 10,000 in each of the territories, Angola, Mozambique and Portuguese Guinea. In Namibia and Zimbabwe, they posed such a threat as to bring South African troops. The very logic of the position of the freedom fighters is that they gravitated towards socialist countries, for it is they who assisted them, while those

who assisted their enemies came from the imperialist camp. And the more protracted became the struggle, the greater became their consciousness. Beginning their struggle with the elimination of oppression, they are beginning to question the entire system of property relations that promotes the exploitation of man by man. Their armies are slowly transformed into people's armies. In other words, armed forces are beginning to rise on the soil of Africa over whom imperialism has no control and who springing from the people, owe their loyalties to the people. Imperialism believed that with its own representatives within the OAU there would be a moderating influence and this would render the national movement ineffective. But the opposite was the case. The pressure from the masses has proved stronger than the pressure from imperialism. Countries which achieved independence by constitutional means are now concerning themselves with armed struggle and to transform their armies into people's armies. This had an effect on the OAU which more and more supported the armed struggle even though some States paid only lip service.

Secondly although there has been no proletarian revolution, and the protracted nature of guerilla warfare has not resulted in the conquest of power, nevertheless imperialism has been attacked from a most unexpected quarter—the military. The military has been hitherto regarded as the bastion of conservatism. It has been used to crush the workers and national liberation movements and later to overthrow the radical anti-imperialist States. But now in Africa, it is the military which overthrew the civilian puppet States in Somalia, Sudan, and Libya. Congo-Brazzaville where a coup had taken place a little earlier proclaimed itself a Marxist-Leninist State. Sudan expelled the Peace Corps while Libya asked the British and the Americans to evacuate their foreign air bases. The West does not have the ideas with which to win the battle of the

mind. Their so-called aid has now been exposed as something which promotes their own interests. Therefore their strength lay in the military. The armies were to be used as instruments of counter-revolution. Deprived of this, imperialism is now impotent.

Progressive Role

The military governments of these four countries have played a progressive role. They have come out in support of freedom movements in southern Africa and in Palestine. At the recent OAU and non-aligned conferences their radical stand on various matters stiffened the background of the OAU. Since then Somalia and Sudan have announced that they are committed to building socialism.

The third factor in the situation has been the determination of some of the former colonies to break the stranglehold of the West and to control the economic resources of their countries. Independence had placed into their hands the political machinery of the State. From this vantage point they struck. Tanzania for instance announced its road to socialism by the Arusha Declaration which broke the neck of finance capital, by nationalising the banks and insurance companies. Zambia, too, followed with its Mulungushi Reforms by stages which embraced the industrial, mining and the financial. The desire to control economic resources is growing in every African country and this must collide with the interests of imperialism. These States give full support to the liberation struggle and countries like Tanzania and Guinea have transformed themselves into revolutionary base areas.

However the new feature in this whole situation is that these forces have chosen to link themselves with socialist countries, particularly with the People's Republic of China. If some countries have discredited the socialist system by adopting the values of the capitalist system, of charging interest rates, or giving aid

with strings, it is not so with China under Mao. In contrast to the "goulash socialism", its road has been marked by austerity at home, so that part of the surplus could be used to assist liberation movements and those countries struggling for economic independence. China is a poor country, but yet it has made available a grant of £125 million to build the TANZAM railway.

The significance of the TANZAM project is that for the first time African people have come into contact with new men grown on the soil of socialism, with new values and a new system of morality.

If capitalism in the era of decadence divides humanity, socialism that is now rising hopes to unite it. This unity is not in the conference halls but in the fields and workshops. In the TANZAM project then, socialism with its new values and new way of life is challenging the capitalist system in the most practical of ways. The combination of these factors reflecting the revolutionary trends in Africa, threatens to alter the balance of power in the whole of this continent for the first time since conquest.

The attempt at dialogue between Vorster and Houphouet-Boigny, and between Heath and Smith must be seen as part of a wider strategy to halt this trend. Natural tides sweep as well as cleanse. So too the revolutionary tides. As they pound the fortresses of imperialism in Africa they will in the process sweep and throw into the dustbins of history the Houphouet-Boignys and Bandas. Their fate will be as ignominious as that of the Lavals and Quislings.

(Concluded)

The Shattered Dream

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

EASY Rider is a lyrical, rhythmic description of the cross-country romp by two hippy motorcyclists from Los Angeles to the New Orleans Mardi Gras festival. But it is more

than a mere travelogue it is a much deeper exploration of the contemporary American scene than the usual picture-postcard-type tourist films. The travellers pursue that everlasting American dream, the dream of the pioneers during the Covered Wagon era and the Stars and Stripes of Wyatt and the Red Indian bearing of Billie seem to symbolise the two Americas, two conflicting civilisations converging at one point. Their object is to rediscover the primitive purity and the charm of America and as the camera tracks along the wide roads, the passing landscapes, the gigantic rock-structures and the lush, soothing green, these modern Colum-buses are charmed and awed by the pleasures of their pursuit. They are like true explorers, braving all the hazards of the journey, camping in the caves, inside some derelict houses and occasionally under the open sky. They are hippies, but not freaks or drop-outs and the flower-people they visit on their way are also living with a sense of purpose, although there is an unreality and a sad uncertainty about their existence, for while they have decidedly left the traditional mores of their artificial city-bred living, striking new roots will not be that easy. Anyway they drag on, throwing the seeds on an arid soil and praying for a rich harvest so that they can have their so simple food. They mean a new hope for our travellers, and merrily they roll along. Again the idyllic journey, the haunting silhouettes and the sun-rays against the camera-lenses add a new dimension of colour designs.

But the disillusionment is not long in coming and soon the explorers realise what man has done to the God's country. An unceremonious arrest leads to a friendship with George Hanson, an alcoholic small-town lawyer who also joins the ride. Now the trouble begins and the dream is shattered. A brutal lynching of Hanson, an LSD-induced hallucination inside the cemetery, the lewd, impersonal nature of the carnival itself, seem to mop off much of their missionary zeal as is evident

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from Wyatt's summing up of the whole situation when he bitterly remarks, "We blew it." But the climax of their tragedy is yet to come. As they start for Florida with a heavy heart, two drunken truck-drivers block their way and shoot them because they do not seem to like Billy's long hair and as the camera cranes up to show the desolate countryside while the flames from the burnt motor-cycles rise up to the sky and the musical sound-track suddenly comes to a muffled silence, the full import of Dennis Hopper's apocalyptic statement on modern America penetrates the mind with relentless lucidity.

Two Belgian Films

Belgium is usually known for its excellent short films on painting and architecture and occasional documentary portrayals of the Congo. Recently two feature films from that country have been shown here, both directed by Emile Degelin. The first, *Death of a Peasant*, is a description of the last hours of a Flemish peasant, whose hitherto ordinary existence suddenly becomes meaningful as he recalls the many tender and passionate moments of his past life. The second one is a rather complex study of the difficult emotional relationships between a brother and a sister. Both the films are impeccably photographed and the general treatment also has a mark of taste and sophistication.

Clippings

Shooting Down Satellites

Recent Soviet space tests in which two satellites were apparently deliberately destroyed by a third indicate that the Russians have developed a weapon capable of shooting down "enemy" vehicles. The spacecrafts involved were numbers 373, 374 and 375 in the Cosmos series of scientific vehicles.

...The Cosmos satellites were launched in the course of a week. Tracking information showed that about four hours after the launch of Cosmos 374, this satellite was manoeuvred close to the 1st vehicle 373. Cosmos 374 then disappeared from the tracking screens and all that could be detected were several dozen fragments. An identical fate overtook Cosmos 375 when it was launched a few days later and guided into a similar orbit close to the first vehicle. The obvious interpretation of these events is that the Russians have developed a weapon capable of shooting down an "enemy" reconnaissance space vehicle.

...*Aviation Week* (the American magazine) is highly critical of the United States Department of Defence for trying to suppress information about this development. (*The Times*)

Electronic Battlefield

An electronic battlefield where sensors and "people sniffers" pick up hostile movement, infra-red beams guide infantry to the enemy and computers evaluate combat information, is the goal of an extensive research programme under way in the United States Army. The overall battlefield control system (IBCS) that will take over most of the battlefield intelligence functions served from the earlier times by the patrol.

Professional soldiers contemplating dwindling defence budgets believe that the system would facilitate the use of the agile, shock army that now appears the only possible American answer to the Communist block's numerical superiority.

The Army is enthusiastic about electronic assistance on future battlefields. It will not eliminate the harsh decisions of war, however. The general still must choose his course of action. The infantryman still must seize and hold terrain.

The advantage would be that command, instead of struggling to evaluate a mound of information, could turn the job over to computers. The answers could then be transmitted to

commanders at lower echelons, where they would become the military intelligence on which forces were committed to the battle.

The system is being tested by a special Army agency at Fort Hood, Texas. (*The Times*)

Respectable Unemployment

Unemployment has acquired an unaccustomed respectability in America. Usually looked upon with intense suspicion as an ill-disguised ploy by the lazy to win ill-deserved welfare benefits, the plight of worklessness has now straddled the class barriers to affect the affluent.

In New York a former vice-president of a chemical corporation, who was earning \$80,000 (£33,453) a year, has now been job-hunting for six months. A \$20,000 public relation man, dismissed in May, proudly declined a drink with me the other day and, with a slightly embarrassed smile, stood in line for a bus home instead of hailing a cab. In Los Angeles a highly qualified engineer has found that the only job open to him is digging ditches.

What the Federal Administration still calls a slight recession, but what the affected are beginning to feel is a full-blown depression, has the professional executives and the cream of the technologists on the run.

...Graduates are leaving universities and finding no openings awaiting them. New figures released by the New York state department of labour reveal that the number of professional and managerial claimants for unemployment benefit has more than doubled in the past year. It was the highest proportional increase for any category of worker.

The liquidation of 10 Stock Exchange firms and the merging of others has put scores of Wall Street brokers out of work. Others in the firing line have been personnel directors, advertising staff, publishing executives and research and development middlemen. On Long Island, New York, in Massachusetts and in Seattle, Washington, curtailment of federal defence and aerospace projects has

caused thousands of highly qualified engineers to lose their jobs.

For many of the more affluent unemployed it is still a novel, if unnerving experience...

The high-powered executives usually have immense self-confidence and find it difficult to accept the fact that they will not find an equally good position elsewhere. For these, failure to find a new job quickly can be as shattering as for a factory worker.

...For the present however the only thriving concerns appear to be the cobblers. They are reported to be experiencing a boom in soling and heeling custom-made footwear. (Michael Knipe in *The Times*).

Not so Respectable

The world is shrinking for the Keralite job-seeker—a claustrophobic situation for 18 million Malayalees who in the fifth generation of education are crowded into a small and not fully developed State and are thus dependent on employment outside their State more than any other linguistic group in the country..

A Malayalee employed outside the State visiting Kerala is sooner or later confronted with the prime question: "Can you get me a job? There is nothing available here."

A school teacher's job fetching a salary of Rs 150 a month commands a preliminary "donation" of up to Rs 2,500 by the job-seeker to the school management. Young men with M.A. degrees borrow money at usurious rates of interest and offer it to men of influence for "recommendations" for bus conductors' jobs. Graduates queue up for posts of drivers carrying a salary of Rs 75. The employment factor in the recruitment by foreign Roman Catholic convents of Malayalee girls is obvious. (*The Statesman*).

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Letters

Will Murder Out ?

My friend Gopal Krishna Bagchi was rounded up by the police along with seven or eight other people on suspicion that he was involved in Naxalite activities and beaten up mercilessly while in custody. When the police discovered some papers on his person indicating that he was State Government employee in the Department of Information and Publicity, he was released on PR Bond with the warning that he must not tell anyone about how he was treated in the lock-up. There was, however, a streak of kindness in their behaviour—they advised him to get medical treatment from any private doctor.

Then there was no trace of Gopal for quite a number of days. His neighbours grew anxious. One day as the stench of putrid flesh came out from his flat at Behala, they peeped through some window or chinks of his room. There lay Gopal dead, swathed in bandages.

The police were informed. They came but refused to take any action. They left putting their own lock on the door of his room. But surreptitiously they came back at dead of night trying to disfigure the face and other parts of his body with acid to foil any identification at the post-mortem examination.

The son of a retired civil servant (Sub-Deputy Magistrate), Gopal never dabbled in politics. He was an extremely shy, amiable and introvert young man when I first made his acquaintance in 1956 or so. He was an avid reader of books on philosophy and all that and had no enemies.

I cannot yet bring myself to believe that Gopal is no more, that he has been done to death in a gruesome manner. Should the killers go with impunity?

BHANU GUPTA
Ranaghat, Nadia.

A Political Holiday

Lenin's theory of peaceful co-existence struck new horizons on December 8, the day of the Bangla Bandh. The strike passed off peacefully without striking any of the contending forces, the so-called big left on the one side and the police on the other. Let us not be deafened by the order-restoring firings of the police in North Calcutta; for, to compensate for it all, we have the happy chorus chanted by both the Home Department and the EPC and the SPC over the success of the peaceful Bandh. Who could have ever imagined such novel co-existence between the police and the revolutionaries?

Yet under this greenwood tree of so-called Marxism, I, as much a misfit as melancholy Jaques, can't get out of my head some impertinent questions. Why should Jyoti Basu put his own residence under police protection instead of under his 'Red Guards'? Why did he send the Eastern Frontier Rifles to Gopiballavpur? No, Messrs Basu and Dasgupta, you are living in a fool's paradise if you think that public memory is so short. Even today, your men are informing the police of the whereabouts of your political opponents. They are not even ashamed of taking the police to the houses of sleeping people at night to pick up their opponent. Nefarious night spies of the police, you are by day the sky-rending slogan-shouters against them. We are not surprised. We know tradition of spying has gone deep in your blood and bone, since the 1942 Quit India movement.

People feel disinterested in these mock-fights against the police. While the great were crowing over the success of the Bandh and its gains in terms of seats in the Assembly, the people enjoyed a Roman holiday in a perfect festive mood. Only the North said something else, in terms of bullets and crackers. Maybe the writing is on the north wall.

SANKAR SARMA
Calcutta

This is about the Bandh of December 8. For one who had the opportunity to be in Calcutta on that day and a good part of the previous evening and in a sub-divisional town easily accessible by suburban trains on the bandh day it was a unique experience of how gay a voice of protest can be. In the sub-divisional town police and CRP personnel no longer looked so threatening, even the police officers in thanas were having tete-a-tete with old and young alike. In the evening, after a nice nap following a sumptuous lunch, a few young men with pullovers or shawls on came out shouting slogans mingled with laughter and chit chat about cinema stars and then proceeded to an SPC organised meeting in the municipality building, where speaker after speaker roared about the police atrocities, the Naxalite menace and the fight of peasants against landlords. A little distance away, in the EPC arranged meeting attended by a handful of persons, the subjects were the same, with the addition of mud-slinging against the CPM. The meetings over, the people—the organisers of the meetings and the slogan-shouters, went back to their houses, to come out dressed more comfortably to meet their friends and relatives or to attend various social calls. A few women, all state government employees, strolled out for an evening walk. For those who have to work shoulder to shoulder with peasants and contract labour, and their womenfolk with the emaciated babies slung over their shoulders toiling along with their husbands for a mere Rs 1.75 a day, and living in perpetual danger of being thrown out of employment either as daily labour in field or construction works, the hartal—the way things were done—appeared as apocryphal. Who remembered the four dead young men of Beliaghata or the 11 bodies at Barasat and the numerous cases of torture or death in police lock-ups? Their memories were lost in the blare of speakers abusing each other from two different rostrums and demanding elections at an early date.

Bally, Howrah

A. C.

Mending Fences

Mr R. K. Sharma, in his article "Mending Fences with Peking" (November 7), seems to advise the Government of India to act in a way most suited for its national interests. Thus he shows concern at the reduction in India's diplomatic manoeuvrability in international diplomacy because of the cold war with China. It means, he wants stoppage of the cold war, so that India's diplomatic manoeuvrability can increase. According to him, China has recently started making gestures towards India. But can he say that China's attitude towards India now is in any way different from her attitude after the 1962 border conflict? Even at that time, China made all possible efforts to settle the border problem with India. It was the Indian Government which all along frustrated her efforts. Mr Sharma ascribes this change in China's attitude to the fact that "the dust of the Cultural Revolution has nearly settled in China". It seems, he wants to suggest that the Cultural Revolution there was a phase and has now come to a stop. Secondly, that after the fever of the Cultural Revolution has gone down, the Chinese communists are now in a position to settle their differences with others. Both these propositions are meaningless. The Cultural Revolution is a continuous process and cannot be put in phases. This has been very well asserted by the CPC in its documents at the time of the Ninth Party Congress.

At the end, Mr Sharma suggests that India should reciprocate commensurate to China's gestures to see if there is any way to mend the fences. It seems, he does not want India to play any active role in this respect, but only to reciprocate indifferently as the situation seems to warrant. Here he repeats the words of the bourgeois leaders in saying, "without slackening our defence preparedness". These words suggest two things—a rabid nationalistic attitude on the part of the author and a danger of attack by socialist China. Both these

suggestions imply lack of socialistic conviction on the part of the author.

SURAJ SINGH
New Delhi

The Betrayers

I am no Naxalite nor do I support the methods adopted by them. But I do not believe that the movement as a whole can be dismissed as "an infantile disorder" as is being done so easily by the left parties of India today. The history of the Communist Party of India has been, to say the least, a history of betrayal of the Indian peasants and workers. The party has seldom shown a proper understanding of our problems and has successfully beguiled the people before and after independence. Before freedom it slavishly followed the Soviets and after 1947 when the revolutionary movement of the peasants and workers was in full swing from Telangana to Assam and the first signs of success were visible, the CPI decided that it had committed an 'error' and came out with support for the Nehru regime. From then on it has been betrayal at every step. Its present stand is just the logical conclusion of the policies. It is time it gave up the red flag and the hammer and sickle. The party's fear of the Naxalite movement is based on solid grounds; it believes that the Naxalites are about to take the wind out of its sails by speaking the language that it was using just after independence. Almost similar is the case with the CPI(M). Although it has not yet compromised on some fundamental issues and continues to display its lack of faith in the Indian Constitution, it too has grown panicky and is doing its best to wipe out the movement. Slogans alone cannot keep the people drugged for all time. In every revolutionary struggle, movements like the Naxalite one have always been the preludes. Lenin did not agree with the Populists, but then could he have denied that the Populists and the Nihilists did help pave the way for scientific Mar-

xism in Russia? Could he have denied the sacrifice of his brother Alexander? Can his influence be totally discounted from the life of Lenin? He was critical of the Populists and disapproved of individual acts of terrorism, but not always. But he would have never gone to the extent our Indian communists are going, in wiping out the movement. For such movements are always an inevitable part of the greater revolutionary struggle.

READER
Gauhati

Maharashtra Strike

You have raised a very important issue in 'United they fall' (November 28) when you question the wisdom of the organisers of the Maharashtra government employees strike on a minor issue like interim relief. There is no doubt that the government employees do have genuine grievances but they are minor in comparison to the manifold needs of the masses. Is it proper on the part of leftist parties to lead a strike for pay rise of government employees when already most of the government expenditure are on salaries? I think the time has come when we should not exhaust our energies in organising futile strikes on minor issues.

GORA MUKHERJEE
New Delhi

Co-Operatives

If any glaring instance of inefficient bureaucracy and the disastrous effects of the collaboration of its officials with vested interests is needed, one has only to look at the fate of the Calcutta Wholesale Consumers' Co-operative Society Ltd. and hundreds of its affiliate primaries as also of its two ancillary units, viz. the Central and North Samavayikas. The present Managing Committee at its last meeting held on November 27 remarked that the picture was both disquieting and discouraging. The two Samavayikas were set up, one in 1966 and the other in 1967, in the

teeth of opposition from a major section of the non-official cooperators who uttered almost a prophetic warning that these could not thrive under the management of the CWS, which had become a beehive of self-seekers under official patronage. And today the institutions are almost on the verge of collapse for the reason that a sizable portion of their working capital is being eaten up by overhead expenses including staff salaries.

Grave warnings uttered by an important section of the non-official cooperators represented by the Calcutta District Co-operative Union led Mrs Renu Chakravorty, the then Cooperation Minister, to appoint a Committee of Enquiry in June 1969, which submitted an interim report in July 1969 and a final report in December 1969. The Committee found that in the Accounts Department some half-naked book-keepers with unknown antecedents were making a mess of everything.; 11,500 kg of skimmed milk powder had been purchased at an average cost of Rs 8.61 per kg, but the stock was later disposed of at Rs 4.75 per kg; these were only illustrative and not exhaustive and showed the irresponsible manner in which the Society was being managed. Barring a short period of nine months from June 13, 1964, the Directors appointed by the Registrar constituted more than 50 per cent of the total strength of directors. During the period from March 21, 1965 to July 5, 1967, there was no managing committee, the administration being carried on by the Chairman and the Executive Officer under the supervision of the Joint Registrar.

The enquiry committee therefore came to the conclusion that the responsibility for mismanagement must rest with the Government and said the Government must come forward with further financial assistance if the institution was intended to serve the consumers in fighting profiteers in the private trade. What the Government did was to promote those who were responsible for the mismanagement to higher posts and express a pious desire that the Society

would approach the commercial banks rather than expect any Government assistance. As if any commercial bank would be interested in financing an organisation which the wrong policy of the Government and the performance of its own officials have practically brought to the verge of ruin!

SECRETARY,
Calcutta Wholesale Consumers'
Co-op Society Ltd.

No Time-Table, Please

Since the days of the heavy rainfall last September local train services in Sealdah Division seem to have reached the point of no movement. The authorities can seldom put the new October time-table into actual effect. Almost all the trains now run half an hour behind schedule causing daily cancellation of several 'locals' in the division. Power failure, theft of overhead wire and accidents are an everyday affair. Passenger demonstrations too occasionally cause late running which itself is the cause of such demonstrations.

The sufferings of the commuters beggar description. The only service the railway authorities can now render the travelling public is to stop publication of the Suburban Service Time-Table so that people may catch trains as they do trams and buses.

PRANAB SANKAR ROY
Barasat, 24-Parganas

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And with them has come a new prosperity. Jaipur has become one of the most exotic tourist destinations of the world. Palaces have found a new function as hotels. People have more jobs. As waiters and porters, taxi-drivers and guides. The traditional crafts of Jaipur have won world-wide renown. The ancient skills and glories of Jaipur have become the harbingers of a bright future. Thanks to tourism.

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