

frontier

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RIG AND RULE

IN mid-winter the Prime Minister has drawn the political parties of West Bengal out of their hibernation. She has given them a job to their liking, and blusters and backstairs intrigues are in full swing. The hicciusdocius of election has thrown the left parties into further disarray, though it is not clear yet that election to the West Bengal Assembly will be held simultaneously with the mid-term parliamentary poll to enable the parties to carry on their struggle for whatever-it-is from without and within the legislature. Of both the people of West Bengal have seen enough, and for the vast majority of them it does not perhaps matter much who secure the mandate for filling the Assembly chamber with sanctified and privileged noise. Over the years they have learnt not to hope much; they will not unlearn the lesson whatever be the final pattern of splits in the left, euphemistically called alliances. The only exceptions are the committed, those who belong to one party or another and their hangers-on. Notwithstanding the tall claims of the political parties about their ever-growing influence, the number of such election enthusiasts will not exceed two million; which means that not more than one in twenty people in the State is vitally interested in the expensive exercise the Prime Minister has promised the country as a New Year gift.

This has not deterred the political parties from trying to mount a campaign in the name of the people of the State for election to the Assembly simultaneously with the Lok Sabha poll. The most militant of them, the CPM, has sent a telegram to the Prime Minister asking for a simultaneous election; other political parties have made a similar appeal to her in their own ways. Whether she will grant the appeal depends on what she considers suits her interest. For those unacquainted with the tricky process of her political calculations it is, however, difficult to believe that some extra law and order hazard will be involved if a voter is asked to cast an extra vote for the Assembly election when he goes to the polling booth to vote for the Lok Sabha candidate of his choice. Obviously, the plea is phony; it is being invoked, though most unconvincingly, to enable the Prime Minister to carry out her plan to de-link parliamentary election from elections to State Assemblies. The reason for the proposed de-linking is said to be to ensure that the parliamentary election is fought on national issues and not vitiated by petty regional or

local considerations ; as if the millions of citizens who participate in the quinquennial ritual know or care to know of the national problems. They are, and will be, guided by problems of their immediate concern ; they cannot afford the luxury of hair-splitting over the radicality of the combatants in an election regarding national policies. Such considerations weigh with only those for whom the problem of animal survival is not a whole-time occupation.

One of the reasons for de-linking is not so naive or innocent. Simultaneous election to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies has so far enabled the political parties to fight on the two fronts practically on the budget of one ; each party has pooled all its resources to finance jointly the electioneering of its parliamentary and assembly candidates ; the expenditure on the campaign for one has proportionately reduced that on the other. De-linking will almost double this expenditure. In setting up candidates for the parliamentary election a few weeks hence the parties will have to bear in mind the expenditure they will have to incur on assembly elections next year. As the majority of the parties are regional if not wholly State-based, their stakes are higher in Assembly elections ; for sheer survival they will have to economise on parliamentary elections. The Prime Minister's apparently innocuous plan is, therefore, aimed at emasculating opposition in the parliamentary election and placing the affluent parties at an advantage. And few will doubt that despite her liberal professions her party will have access to funds denied to others for the simple reason that it is in power. This is another form of rigging the election, of ensuring that the party with the biggest purse bags the largest number of seats. If election in West Bengal is limited to the Lok Sabha only, it will be solely on this ground. The Prime Minister will order an assembly election only if she finds that the nature of party alliances in the State does not call for resort to this strategy here.

Murder

A brilliant economist teaching at a university has been warned thrice, in posters, that he will be killed. Though a bit uneasy, he laughed it off—until Wednesday, December 30, when the news broke of the brutal murder of the Vice-Chancellor of Jadavpur University. The professor, a leftist far from unsympathetic to the Naxalites, does not quite believe that they can be after him. But there is no knowing who is doing what to whom and why. The general tendency, fed by newspaper reporting, is to associate the CP(ML) with almost every such attack. Even that on a former High Court judge who was to conduct the Barasat enquiry was ascribed to the Naxalites and the police arrested two young suspects, though the enquiry was supposed to be concerned with the murder of eight Naxalites and the police were suspect.

It would not do, of course, to blame the press alone for the public image of the CP(ML). The propaganda organ of the party, before it went underground, had created a climate in which almost anything could be said of the CP(ML). It seldom disclaimed the things ascribed to the party. The language was often raucous, heady and contemptuous of any dissent : if you made any stray remark about the Mahatma that could be interpreted as a partial recognition of his role, you were a worm, and worms can be finished off.

One can understand the impatience and anger of young men who know they can be attacked, and betrayed any day by the crusading Marxists to the police, arrested, tortured, or shot dead. The times and the partisans are murderous, but in the mutual murder game what is being forgotten is the opinion of the uncommitted, the battle for the minds of men. There is a good deal of revulsion at what is happening. The revulsion is turning into apathy. This apathy and the hideous inter-party vendettas are responsible for the way the police and

other people are getting away with everything. The CP(ML), deprived of regular publications, cannot fight all the way the propaganda of much bigger and more organised parties. However, whatever the hurdles, the CP(ML) leaders and cadres owe it to themselves, their ideology, their cause, to do everything possible to preserve their image. Their responsibility is much greater because they proclaim Mao Tse-tung as their Chairman, and by no stretch of dialectics can indiscriminate murder be equated with Maoism. With so many agents-provocateurs around, decentralisation of party activities—a necessity at times—can lead to dangerous developments if the strictest ideological discipline is not maintained.

A Tale Of Drugs And Tea

The Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Limited was set up in 1962 with Russian collaboration and in six years piled up a loss exceeding Rs 32 million. The story of the loss is the story of the style of work of the present Leninists in Russia. One does not find in it either the Russian revolutionary sweep or American efficiency, the two supposed features of Leninist work.

The estimates of the three plants—antibiotic, synthetic and surgical instruments—were revised five times in eight years and every revision raised the estimates ; the final revision hiked them from the initial Rs 35.65 crores to Rs 53.90 crores, or more than 62 per cent.

The construction of the project was begun in 1962 without fixing any schedule for completion. In 1964 the completion schedules were drawn up and then revised twice. The revisions, incidentally, were not necessitated by any technological change in the pharmaceutical industry.

The Russians did not make up their minds about the technology to be offered to the IDPL and kept on

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revising their suggestions from time to time. That resulted in delay in construction and commissioning of the plants. The economy of the plants was thus made precarious.

This is the Russian side of the picture. The Indian side of the deal is as worthy.

The GOI, before entering the collaboration project, did not explore other sources of collaboration, did not make any enquiries or collect information about availability or price of drug technology. Russia is not famous for her antibiotic techniques; in fact she is several years backward in terms of quality and yields. The GOI made a deal with Messrs Technoexport, Moscow, in good socialist faith. It did not even ask for the basic information about the plants and their working results. The firm was spared even normal business worries by the GOI dropping from the contract the penalty provision for late delivery of equipment and machinery.

The GOI did not bother to conduct any demand survey for the plants and why should the Russians violate the Pancha Shil by intruding into such internal matters of an independent country? The capacity of the tetracycline group of antibiotics was therefore fixed at 120 tonnes, even though the Indian authorities wanted it to be fixed at 50 tonnes and the actual consumption in India was about 10 tonnes. By the time chlorotetracycline had become an obsolete antibiotic and even doctors in India ceased to prescribe it, the IDPL continued to manufacture 70 tonnes of this drug till 1967. It was then used as animal feed.

These are all the findings of the Lok Sabha Committee on Public Undertakings (1968-69) and not the opinion of any Russo-bashing Indian chauvinists. These are merely recording facts or non-existence of facts under which Russian collaboration in drugs was obtained and executed. The result was an investment of Rs 530 million, and incurring a loss of Rs 32 million. At the concurrent time other pharma-

ceutical firms were started which made 100 times profit. This is some prestige work by Russia and the Indian public sector!

Read with this the story of Darjeeling tea. Russia, the monopolist buyer of Darjeeling tea, resells it to Western European countries and gets in exchange precision goods. Rouble is worthless in the dollar market, the dollar being equal to 7 roubles although the official rate of exchange is 0.9 roubles. Russia earns hard currency by virtue of India and under cover of socialist aid.

The Trade Agreement

Meanwhile, the wagon deal seems to be off for all practical purposes. At a time when India was in the depth of her periodic cycles of crisis Moscow proposed to buy wagons to back her up. But the deal has bounced on the question of price. The Soviet Union reportedly offered a little more than half the price that India demanded. There has reportedly been no progress in the situation in the trade agreement concluded last weekend.

When the reformists took over the Kremlin and began to re-order economic relations with the Third World, the commerce between Moscow and New Delhi was at a trickle, about Rs 1.3 crores. Then it went up by leaps and bounds and the total turnover, in 1969-70, worked up to about Rs 346 crores, an annual growth rate of 12 per cent approximately. The new agreement is expected to push up the rate a notch further to 15 per cent annually over five years. This growth rate is to be related to trade diversification of a certain degree under the existing constraints of the two economies. The Soviet shopping list in India, under the new agreement, consists in the main of durable consumer goods spiced with some items of industrial wares like electrically operated motors. The proportion of industrial goods is to be upped gradually from

44 per cent to 60 per cent by 1975. Moscow would, in exchange, give surface vessels of assorted types, increased quantities of platinum, zinc, nickel, kerosene, steel, non-ferrous metals, and, on the other hand, copper. The purchases are to be made, the agreement lays down, from the Soviet-aided units in India. This link-up will enable the Soviet projects in India, which have been running undercapacity for much too long and whose performance so far has been sickening, to make good the leeway. Besides, by this stipulation Moscow contrives, by proxy, to keep tabs on the sales of these units and through them, on the units themselves.

The agreement has another dimension. Our bourgeoisie are a special animal. Though they complain that they do not have money in the kitty for domestic use, they have shown unusual alacrity in exporting capital to the Third World countries in order to use their cheaper labour for fat pickings. Of late Moscow has come to see some pragmatism behind this policy and has flung open its 'socialist' cupboard to Indian capital in the joint ventures with the Third World countries. It may appear innocuous at first, but taken together it fits into a pattern. In the routine public relations after the agreement, the spokesmen of both the nations said that they were still interested in the wagon deal, subject to an agreement on price. Meanwhile, agreement or no agreement, the sharing of the surplus values of the cheap labour of comparatively have-not nations can go on.

Allende's Progress

Nationalisation of the American-owned mining industry, it seems, is going to be President Allende's New Year gift to the Chilean people. A constitutional amendment recently introduced in the Congress would clear the deck for sweeping nationalisation of the industries, empowering the government to act unilaterally and fix

the amount of compensation as it pleased. Even before the amendment was pushed through Dr Allende, however "temporarily", took over two companies without compensation, acting according to the existing laws which permitted government take-over of closed or badly managed factories. Now with the major opposition party, the Christian Democrats, lining up behind the government-sponsored amendment bill President Allende and his Popular Unity Front would have a free hand to fulfil their election promises of ending foreign monopolies in Chile.

But everything is not as smooth-sailing as it may appear on the surface. The Marxist President, Dr Allende, and his six-party combination PUF, which includes the pro-Moscow Chilean Communist Party, are out to prove that political power does grow out of the ballot box and socialism can be ushered in through legislation by a bourgeois parliament. And as much out of his regard for the Constitution as for soothing the frayed nerves of Washington, President Allende prefers to rely more on legislation than on mass action and promises to pave the way for socialism strictly "within the law". But Chile, with its galloping inflation, land-hungry peasants and restive unemployed youth, would be a difficult country to rule and the self-imposed limitations of Dr Allende have only compounded his problems.

Before the elections he stressed the need to "mobilise the masses to reject an economic policy imposed by the Department of State". But after taking over as President he prefers to play a cautious game with the foreign capitalists. The amended

constitution might well give him the right to unilaterally fix the compensation. But where is he going to get the \$300 million of "fair compensation" he is expected to pay for nationalising the American-owned copper mines? The Export-Import Bank of Washington has already listed Chile as a "grave risk zone" and any move that seriously hurts American capital might throw Chile into deep waters. President Allende cannot forget that half of Chile's \$2,400 million foreign debt is accountable to U.S. investors. It is not surprising that he has fallen back on his promise of nationalising bank and insurance companies along with copper mines and chosen to shelve the former. Nationalisation of copper mines, 51 per cent of which was nationalised by Allende's predecessor, Eduardo Frei, was quite on the cards but multi-national corporations with dominating American capital would prove a pretty hot potato.

The promised wage increase for the Chilean workers is not going to be very easy either. It remains to be seen how President Allende fights inflation and manages to get the necessary funds for the wage-hike. It is too early to expect any concrete step on housing and land reform from a three-month-old government but the going would undoubtedly be rough.

While President Nixon has kept his fingers crossed and the right-wing regimes of Argentina and Brazil have been making menacing military manoeuvres to make sure that the contagion of Chile does not catch the neighbours, the most serious thing for President Allende would be popular disillusionment about his regime. Already thousands of homeless squatters in Santiago have forcibly occupied empty apartments without waiting for the government. Landless peasants in south Chile did not wait for the government to pass a land reform bill; they started grabbing farms. Last month witnessed a wave of strikes by workers demanding immediate implementation of the promise of wage increase.

View from Delhi

The Ticketeering Phase

FROM A POLITICAL
CORRESPONDENT

THE rat race has begun but the main exercise being carried out in the Prime Minister's Secretariat is to find the legal and political alibi for putting off the Assembly elections in West Bengal, all to please Mr Bhupesh Gupta and his party. The law and order problem today is no different from what it was, say, three months ago. If a Lok Sabha poll could be held in West Bengal, there is all the more reason the Assembly elections should be held simultaneously if not earlier. The law and order argument does not wash any more, politically. Mr Jagjivan Ram has clearly told the Prime Minister so. All that the Centre can do now is to get a made-to-order report from Mr S. S. Dhavan that an Assembly election will not end the political deadlock in the State and therefore has to be put off. Nothing is ruled out yet.

There are other imponderables besides West Bengal. Mrs Gandhi thought she could de-link the State Assembly elections from the Lok Sabha elections but the pradesh bosses were not prepared to be taken for a ride. It is a well-known fact in New Delhi that Mr Y. B. Chavan has emerged the leader of a mini-Syndicate comprising the Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. These Chief Ministers thought of a linking up Assembly poll at one stage and Mr Brahmananda Reddy is still set on it. Mr Chavan has no all-India faction and this is an opportunity for him to build one. If he is the leader of the 37 MPs he is trying to get in from his home State and of the ruling Congress MPs from Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, he would have about 50 with him, which is enough to give him the leverage he needs.

Mr Jagjivan Ram does not want to

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be taken for a ride. He is known to have made clear to Mrs Gandhi that there are 118 Reserved seats in the Lok Sabha and he would decide the party's candidates for these States. If he returns a Harijan bloc of 40 or 50, he will also have the leverage he wants.

The forecasts about the ruling Congress party's performance are conflicting. A list being circulated by Mrs Gandhi's strategists gives her party 219 and the Syndicate, 78. She might win anything between 180 and 280, as the forecasts go, depending on one's proximity to the political Establishment here and his predilections about it. If she wins under 200 seats, Mrs Gandhi might not be the Prime Minister and if she wins more than 280 seats, she need not necessarily be the Prime Minister. So it might be in her interest to win about 220 seats and turn out to be the most acceptable leader of a minority government. The CPI and the DMK would be glad to oblige her.

There seem to be some second thoughts about going with the Muslim League in Kerala in view of Mr Jagjivan Ram's opposition. It might mean losing a few seats in Kerala but the Congress-R will stand to gain more in the Hindi-speaking belt if it detaches itself from the Muslim League.

If Mrs Gandhi wants to retain power, she has to win the majority of seats in the populous Hindi belt. This is where the constellation led by her and the one dominated by the Congress-O will collide fiercely. The princes are a factor in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh and the Jana Sangh is a factor in all the Hindi States. If she loses the fight in the Hindi belt she will have to look for seats in the non-Hindi belt which belongs to her allies and not to her party.

Looking at it negatively, there are whole States which are out of bounds for the ruling Congress—Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, West Bengal and Mysore, for example. But it does not necessarily mean that the rival Congress will win them. Similarly there are whole States where the Congress-O

alliance cannot make any impact, like Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, Maharashtra and Kerala. So the fight really is for the Hindi belt.

Most Planned Campaign

This is perhaps the most systematically planned election campaign the ruling party has ever had for a Lok Sabha election. The plans had been drawn up months ago. About Rs 5 crores have already been raised for the campaign and even the lists had been drawn up by the Prime Minister for a snap poll. Only when she sensed opposition from the Pradesh bosses to the de-linking plan did she think of creating an impression that she has gone through the most democratic process of securing the party's mandate. But an innocuous sentence in the Rashtrapati Bhavan communique on December 27 betrayed the plan. She had consulted Mr Giri on December 24, even before she sought the Working Committee's views on a mid-term poll. It is well known that Mr Giri, during his sojourn at Kotakkal, was telling friends that the whole country was waiting for him and he had to go to New Delhi to dissolve the Lok Sabha on December 22. The dissolution did not come off on December 22 and had to await the ritual of a Working Committee mandate and a Cabinet decision and the rubber stamping by the President on December 27.

In any case, the ruling Congress Chief Ministers were forestalled in their plan to seek dissolution of the State Assemblies because the precedent of consultation with the Working Committee had been created. At the time of writing it is not known if Tamil Nadu would be the lone black sheep forcing an Assembly election in spite of the pressure mounted on Mr Karunanidhi in New Delhi. The DMK members of the Lok Sabha initiated the move for simultaneous elections for the Tamil Nadu Assembly because at least two of them are aspiring to become members of the State Cabinet, giving up their Lok Sabha seats.

The scramble for tickets will be

over before mid-January and the campaign will warm up. There are no political issues in the election though Mrs Gandhi wants to make a party issue of the fundamental rights in the Constitution. Her statements at the hurriedly summoned (by the PIB) press conference amounted to a command performance, a follow-up to the election campaign she launched with her broadcast on December 27. Her press conference pronouncements did not betray anything radical but they threw up a major question. The privy purses bill was passed by the Lok Sabha and was blocked by the Rajya Sabha. How does a Lok Sabha poll change the composition of the Rajya Sabha? The talk that she could have continued for another 14 months without having to face a poll lacks both conviction and credibility because she could not have got any major bill through the Lok Sabha if it required a two-thirds majority. Or she might have been defeated in a straight vote a few weeks or months before the scheduled elections next year or during the budget session. Mr Chavan did not want to present the budget after successive finance ministers had messed up the economy and mismanaged the country's finances. No wonder he was running a crash campaign for the dissolution of the Lok Sabha so that he does not have to present a budget that provided for crippling levies. And he has been telling friends that he would demand the Home portfolio after the poll and that he would go down in history as the one Finance Minister who relinquished the portfolio without being denigrated by a wily Prime Minister. In the past, almost all the Finance Ministers have gone out in disgrace.

January 2, 1971

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League's Jihad Against Muslims

RAMJI

THE Kerala Muslim League is having the jitters. It is now fighting the enemy within: the Muslim Education Society (MES), which is non-political and concerned solely with the economic and educational uplift of the incredibly backward and ignorant Muslim masses in Kerala. The "inroads" of this Society which is helping, slowly but surely, to rip apart the composite curtain of politics and pseudo-religion put up by the League bosses to secure the servile following of the illiterate Muslim masses, are now being viewed with alarm by the League bosses. Mr Bafaqui Thangal, the alleged descendant of Md Nabi, and the Hajis and Mullahs who lead the League have called upon the Muslim priests and the Muslim masses to fight the MES, tooth and nail. In this respect the League has cast off its political habiliments and stands revealed as a pack of religious fanatics, determined to uphold the religious obscurantism that has been their stock in trade.

The trouble which had been simmering for the last two years between the League and the MES surfaced recently when Bafaqui Thangal, Mr Md. Koya, the Home Minister, Mr Naha, the Minister for Fisheries, Mr Haji, the Speaker, all resigned from the Society of which they had been ordinary members. And now, it is a fight to the finish between the two camps.

But it would seem the League has bitten off more than it can chew. For, the MES, led by the cream of educated, professional men among the Muslims, has been able to gather more support among the Muslim masses in Muslim strongholds like Malapuram and Ponnani, after the League declared its war on the Society. While the Society lost eleven mem-

bers through resignations, owing to the pressure tactics of League leaders, it has, in return, secured 103 new members. It is securely founded on substantial service to the Muslim and non-Muslim communities too. It was started in 1964, with the sole object of social, economic and educational uplift of the highly backward Muslim masses, which had always been exploited by the League leaders through their political jargon heavily loaded with religious mumbo jumbo. The Society is now running several colleges, hospitals, orphanages, cosmopolitan hostels, craft training centres etc. primarily meant for poor Muslims but open to non-Muslims also. The Society gives scholarships to poor Muslim and non-Muslim students and donates, annually, Rs 15,000 worth of books to deserving poor students. Its total assets amount to over Rs 50 lakhs and it pays out over Rs 8 lakhs per year to its staff in colleges and hospitals etc. It is now on a big expansion programme.

The Society has all along been scrupulously non-political. It has not allowed a politician, of any hue, to be a member of its policy-making body, the 30-member executive committee. And this is precisely the reason for the religious war now mounted by the League against the Society.

With steady accession in political strength and influence through, first, the Congress, next, the Marxists and finally, the CPI and through it the Indira Congress, the League leadership has been trying, for the last two years, to infiltrate into the Executive Committee of the Society. Quite a lot of pressure at the highest level was brought to bear on Dr Gaffoor, the President, and other eminent men of the Society to allow at least three members of the League to serve on its executive committee. The Society, however, stuck to its principles and the enraged League leadership has now erupted into blind fury and insensate utterances. One of the charges against the Society by the League is that it advocates modification of Muslim Shariat laws. A baseless allegation. But the basic

fact is that with the spread of education and knowledge through its activities the Society is helping to free the Muslim masses from blind superstition. This the League is unable to tolerate. Yet another charge is that the Society-conducted a star "nite" (of film stars) to collect money, an anti-Islamic act. Actually the star "nite" was organised and run by top Muslim League leaders who netted a nice pile through it. The Society only joined it as a minor partner, with a minor percentage of returns, as its share.

The blind fury with which the League leaders are now attacking the MES is helping to expose the reactionary, obscurantist nature of the League. The fight is now on between the arch reactionary forces represented by the League leadership and the liberal, modern values which the MES upholds. The fight is going to cost the League very dear. Its stranglehold on the Muslim masses has ended once and for all.

'M. N. is Willin'

The one-man brains trust of the CPI, Mr M. N. Govindan Nair, is very much in the news. This gentleman, all of a sudden, came out with an invitation to the Kerala Congress to join the mini-front Ministry. M. N. announced his and his party's 'willingness' at a press conference, recently. And this has provoked a storm of protest from the allies of the ruling front and the power behind it, the Indira Congress. The leaders of these parties have condemned M. N.'s invitation, stating that neither he nor his party, which is in a minority, has any power to issue such a statement, unilaterally. The CPI, in the vainglorious mood of the tail which wags the dog, has evidently overreached itself. Maybe, it expected that once the party committed itself openly, the other partners of the front and the Indira Congress too would think twice before contradicting the party's stand, as it would cast a shadow on the public credibility of the mini-front. In this case the CPI would have been able to project its

role as the leader of the front and its supporters. But, M. N's calculation went awry. The sharp nature of criticism levelled against him by the leaders of the other parties in the front has revealed that they are in no mood to tolerate the conceited stance of the CPI.

M. N. and his party had another provocation for issuing this invitation. Although, till very recently, the CPI had condemned the Kerala Congress as the champions of plantation owners and landed vested interests, the CPI realised that with the present wafer-thin majority enjoyed by the mini-front in the Assembly and with the unpredictable PSP as one of the components of the Front, it would be advisable to have the support of the Kerala Congress also. And to the CPI political expediency is the touchstone for political assessments of other parties. The Kerala Congress has rejected the invitation. And things are not happy with the mini-front. But with the new technique evolved by the two Achutha Menon ministries, the Front may not be challenged for a long time to come. The technique is pure and simple. Hold the Assembly for the bare minimum of business laid down by the Constitution and for the rest, run the government through ordinances. It is fantastic that, even when dozens of bills were pending before the Assembly, providing sufficient business for two weeks sitting at least, the Leader of the House got up coolly as soon as the appropriation bills were passed and stated blandly that there was no further business on hand. And the Assembly was adjourned! It is very evident that the mini-front is fighting shy of the Assembly and it hopes to carry on administration through ordinances. That this is a violation of the spirit of the Constitution and that it renders the elected MLAs impotent, are factors which have no weight with the Achutha Menon Ministry.

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Bihar

A Post-Mortem

N. K. SINGH

BIHAR too has taken to the path of U.P. At this rate, as a Congress(O) leader put it, it would soon be a centre without circumference.

The downfall of the Daroga Rai Ministry was inevitable; it was the writing on the wall. The moment Mr Rai assumed office, ten months ago, on February 19, 1970, people started looking for the day when the Government would fall. But in the speculation on timing all the political observers proved wrong. Actually, it was a matter of surprise that Mr Rai continued in his office for rather a long term; ten months actually is too much for any ministry in this age when the country is passing through a phase of political instability.

There is no doubt that Mr Rai did not conduct himself creditably. Even his own partymen made grave allegations against him challenging his integrity and sincerity. He made too many promises which he did not and perhaps could not fulfil. Actually, the Ministry had made itself a laughing stock by indulging in mere gimmicks. Corruption in high places had become the talk of the town and casteism was practised in its most naked form. These two evils became worse during the ten-month tenure of the Rai Government. In postings and transfers of Government officials a lot of favouritism and unfairness was openly practised, further breaking the backbone of the already battered administration in the State.

Some of the Ministers behaved in a disgraceful manner which created public resentment. The Chief Minister was not able to control them. The Ministry will be remembered for the venomous speeches of Mr Jagdeo Prasad of the Soshit Dal, who took up the cause of backward castes on behalf of his party and gave an open

call to attack and destroy the upper caste people. The "Lenin of Bihar", as he termed himself, said that what India needed was a caste war and not class struggle. The poor Mr Daroga Rai could do nothing and was either helplessly looking on or went on apologising in public for the behaviour of his Cabinet colleagues.

However, Mr Rai proved himself to be a cunning politician and managed to save his Government by means of various political gambles, which were an open secret. He exploited the greed for ministerial posts among his Cabinet partners. But to satisfy every MLA was not possible and hence the astute politician adopted the strategy of piecemeal swearing in.

The fall of his Ministry did not come all of a sudden. It had been facing serious trouble for a couple of months with a section of Congressmen demanding change in the leadership. As a matter of fact, the revolt against the Chief Minister in the Bihar Congress(R) Legislature Party had been simmering for some months. But the dissidents chose to bring it to a head at a crucial and psychological moment —on the eve of the Patna AICC session.

Caste politics was said to be behind the trouble. A former discredited Minister, Mr R. L. S. Yadav, has been regarded as the sole representative of the backward communities till now. But his own casteman, Mr Daroga Rai, tried to establish himself as the champion of the backward. As caste support matters a lot in Bihar where practically every leader is a caste leader, a big rivalry started between the two. A

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West Bengal.

raid on Mr Yadav's house was conducted by the CBI as follow-up action on the Aiyer Commission report. Mr Yadav's friends feel that the raid was conducted at the instance of the Chief Minister to cut Mr Yadav to size. Mr Yadav, an able organiser, has a sizable following in the State Congress. According to political observers, he took keen interest in the move to oust Mr Rai.

Instead of handling the situation with firmness, the High Command behaved as a frightened and demoralised group unwilling to face the realities. Nothing was done probably because the Congress President, Mr Jagjivan Ram, was against a change in leadership in Bihar.

Conscious of the weakness of Mr Daroga Rai, several small parties in the coalition—the Jharkhand, the Hul Jharkhand, the Soshit Dal, the parallel PSP and the BKD—which had been nursing their own grievances formed a mini-front to put pressure on him. Most of the grievances of these mini-front leaders were personal in nature, but with corruption flourishing all-round, Mr Rai hardly had the courage to expose them.

The role of the dissidents and the mini-front created several crises.

The CPI and the PSP, which are still supporters of the Indira Congress, also created an air of uncertainty because both decided to boycott the meetings of the Co-ordination Committee of the ruling coalition.

Some assurances given by Mr Rai assuaged the feelings of the CPI.

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The PSP also decided to continue its support to the Government. But the parallel PSP, the BKD and the Bagun Sombrai faction of the Jharkhand Party withdrew their support at a crucial moment—just when a no-confidence motion was admitted against the Government.

Now, it would be idle to blame the opposition parties for bringing about the fall of the Rai Government. It is the business of the opposition to run down, and, if possible, to oust the Government. But it must be said that since the last session of the Assembly, the opposition did not lift its little finger to do anything to topple it. The SVD, comprising the SSP, the Syndicate, the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra, had become moribund to an extent that it was believed to be dead. It was Mr Rai himself who created a situation which even an opposition comprising simpletons could not fail to take advantage of.

The half-dead SVD became active with the support of the mini-front and dissident Congressmen and managed to bring down the coalition. A significant feature of the toppling bid was that most of the small parties under the leadership of Rajputs betrayed Mr Daroga Rai. The key man behind the toppling drama was the Syndicate boss, Mr S. N. Singh, a Rajput.

New Government

The present SVD Ministry, headed by Mr Karpoori Thakur of the SSP, is the first SSP-led SVD Government in the country. It has been formed on the pattern of U.P. with the support of the SSP, Congress(O), the Jana Sangh, Swatantra, Janta Party, BKD, Soshit Dal, Jharkhand, the parallel PSP, the Justice Richard faction of Hul Jharkhand and an eight-member independent group, besides some independents and Congress(R) defectors. The total strength of the SVD is claimed to be 169 in a 318-member house. How much long can a Government—with a bare majority of nine—last when its coalition partners have already started threatening it?

No Love Of Labour

RANJAN SENGUPTA

AFTER innumerable committees, study groups, seminars, conferences, and the paraphernalia for three years at a cost of Rs. 35 lakhs, the National Labour Commission has finally delivered the report. It is a cross either between naivete, half-baked knowledge and sheer ignorance, or between covert subservience to monopoly capital and downright hypocrisy.

The Commission could not hide the blatant fact that in the manufacturing industry, for instance, the production per worker is *rising* at the rate of 4 per cent every year. But the wage rate, after correction for price changes, is staying put.

There could be some consolation (very little, though) if the surplus of the *additional* productivity of labour were used for creating more jobs. No; that is not what is happening. Employment is growing at well below 4 per cent.

Put these facts together; and you get the following sordid picture: the gains from the higher productivity of workers are only fattening the capitalists. Industry is expanding, but *at the expense of labour*.

This is happening not only in the manufacturing industry, but all over the economy. The Annual Survey of Industries and the Reserve Bank of India point to the same fact: the share of workers in the national income is going down and down.

Well-paid salary-earners, of course, are an exceptional group. Their share is soaring. Fantastic as it may sound, it is true nevertheless that an executive in the higher echelon of a company usually earns more than 100 times what an ordinary worker earns. And what is more, the gulf is widening.

Not that a top executive is a genius. The fact of the matter is this: to a foreign monopolist it is a relatively small price to pay for the loyal services of the 'native' agent. And what-

ever the imperialist does, the comprador capitalist will not be far behind. It is a merry-go-round for all the three, so long as labour can be plundered.

But the National Labour Commission obviously is not interested in such an analysis.

It has been repeatedly brought out by even official surveys that the families of agricultural as well as industrial workers are all in the red; they cannot survive with the meagre earnings. Even more deplorable is the position of agricultural workers. In villages, 90 per cent of the population live on an average income of 35 paise per day.

Now the Labour Commission has come up with an ingenious trick. It argues that so long as there is massive unemployment in the country, India should have two compartments, so to say. One compartment will have highly capital-intensive 'modern' industries; and the other, labour-intensive 'traditional' activities like agriculture, cottage industries and so on. And then comes the rub. In order to foster this technological dualism, the Commission believes that it is *inevitable and desirable** to keep the agricultural wages down. Low wages would induce labour-intensive techniques. Employment and economic growth—both the birds will be killed with this single stone! But this is just an eyewash.

Recent studies have shown that the big farmers are resorting to mechanisation at the earliest opportunity; as

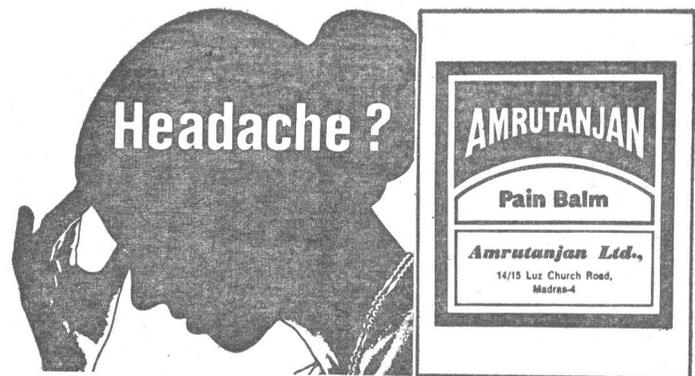
*Government of India, *Report of the National Commission on Labour* (1969), p. 228.

a result small farmers and landless labourers are swelling the ranks of the unemployed. On the other hand, landlords are extracting such exorbitant rents in some areas that sharecroppers find it worthless to use fertilisers, better seeds etc. Where feudalism is the dominant feature, the wage rate matters very little for choice of techniques. Too bad, the neo-classical growth model of the Anglo-American brand does not work in the muddy paddy fields of India.

Is the Labour Commission such a simpleton as not to realise all this? Is it not aware that the subliminally low agricultural wages would drive out people from villages to towns; and the consequent urbanisation will cost a lot more? The Commission is not so foolish. It knows; and this is exactly what it wants.

With cheap labour, the kulaks will then build up their empires in villages. And with the reserve army of labour at hand, reinforced as it will be with the migrants from villages, the foreign monopolists and the comprador capitalists will squeeze the workers to the last drop.

There is nothing new about it; this is the traditional policy of the imperialists. In many a country of Asia, Africa and Latin America, they have first set up a foothold of industrial or commercial base, and then have seen to it that the hinterland is bled white so as to ensure the steady flow of destitute labour. Incidentally, this explains why, in spite of the commercial and industrial supremacy of Calcutta, the neighbouring regions remain impoverished for centuries.



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Bhadralok And Chhotalok

SATYABRATA CHAKRABARTI

ANTHROPOLOGISTS and sociologists are used to studying Indian rural society mainly in terms of the ritual stratification of Varna and Jati. Some scholars have also attempted to study it in terms of class stratification. Cutting across these conventional divisions of caste and class one sees the widespread prevalence of the social categories of bhadrakok and chhotalok in rural as well as in urban West Bengal. Preliminary enquiries into the nature and operation of these concepts reveal that although closely embedded in the traditional matrix of the caste system and in the situational frame of differential distribution of economy and power (i.e. class), the bhadrakok-chhotalok category is analytically distinguishable as a special system of status stratification. It is noted that the behaviour of the people of Bengal, particularly of the Hindus, was considerably influenced by the unique bhadrakok-chhotalok system of hierarchy.

From the descriptions of early 19th century Bengali literature it appears that there is a considerable overlap between the categories of bhadrakok, madhyabitta and the upper castes on the one hand and between chhotalok and the lower castes on the other. The term bhadrakok has a comprehensive spread in rural as well as in urban areas, whereas the term madhyabitta seems to be more restricted to the urban areas.

The origin and development of the concepts of bhadrakok and chhotalok and the related category of madhyabitta offers a complex social problem which deserves logical tackling on empirical grounds with a strong basis in the available historical facts.

It may be briefly put that the concept of bhadrakok and chhotalok had its social prop in the traditional hierarchy of the caste system. It came

to a new focus explicitly after the British advent with some additional attributes approachable on non-caste lines but which were ultimately fitted along caste lines. Thus emerged two extreme social ways of life represented by the bhadrakok and the chhotalok. The former were mainly people of the upper castes—a supervising group (in rural and urban areas) who achieved some Western cultural values beyond the ascribed privileges of caste affiliation while the latter were people of the lower castes—labouring groups who had neither an ascribed nor an achieved status.

The social division of bhadrakok and chhotalok to a great extent has been fluid in cities and towns because of urban and industrial forces but still it plays a significant role in the countryside. The people of Brahmin, Kayastha and Vaidya castes are readily referred to as bhadrakok whereas people of the Hari, Bagdi, Kaora, Chanral, Dom, Muchi castes etc. are referred to as chhotalok.

The bhadrakok enjoy a high status in caste hierarchy. In most cases they have traditional and modern literary background, are employed in prestigious occupations, have a tolerable economic position due to better income and possession of landed or other property, have easy access to the local power structure. An individual who lacks these qualities other than the prestige of birth is not considered a chhotalok; he is eventually carried away with the prevailing current of caste hierarchy. The chhotalok on the contrary enjoy a low status in caste hierarchy, are devoid of traditional or modern literacy, have poor representation in the local power structure or white-collar employment, are absolutely day-labourers and a servicing class for the bhadrakok. They do not enjoy any comfort of polished life and are blocked in their aspirations by the structured socio-economic barriers.

The bhadrakok usually employ the chhotalok in their agricultural or other household activities. Besides this relationship, there is no other interactional ground in social life

between the two. Even in the political field the bhadrakok cadres of the parties committed to the masses do not maintain a consistent contact with the latter group of people.

A sense of emotional unity prevails among the bhadrakok despite their different life experiences, occupational attachments, income and wealth, placing them to form a social aggregate. Their life in general is impressionistic and most of them are distinguished for their bureaucratic temperament. Among the chhotalok a sense of symbolic unity exists; their life experience, subject as they are to common social pitfalls and economic impasse, set them to form an egalitarian aggregate. Their life in comparison to that of their bhadrakok counterparts is relatively expressionistic. They form a part of the rural proletariat in the real sense. Yet there is little sign of poignant class consciousness among them. Acceptance of non-antagonistic caste arrangements minimises the social tension to a considerable extent even today. So the chhotalok in the rural belt cannot improve their individual or group status either through political moves or through education.

In the dichotomy of the bhadrakok-chhotalok social divisions analytical comparison on complete life style is essential. When taken as lump categories bhadrakok-chhotalok stand ideally in sharp contrast to each other in measureable factors like occupation, education, income, power etc. But operational overlapping is not very uncommon when these conceptual hierarchy is considered on some behavioural attributes in isolation from the structural archetype.

The concept of hierarchy based on status and refinement of styles of life is almost universal in some form or other. In India, too, it is evident in various spheres of social and cultural life of the different sections of the people. The bhadrakok-chhotalok hierarchy is one which found its indigenous expression in a particular region (West Bengal) within the matrix of Varna and Jati.

China In Two Thousand And One—II

KALYAN CHAUDHURI

IT is Mao who, withdrawn from the public view since 1959, evolved the theoretical developments and the practical techniques culminating in the Cultural Revolution, a continuous revolutionary process through which the emergence of revisionism during the period of socialism is prevented in order to avoid a reversal of the revolution. Mao personally looks upon this upheaval as his last and possibly his greatest campaign, his final contribution to make China safe for socialism, to make sure the next generation will not squander the hard-won gains of the last forty years, and to make sure that the Chinese people will never abandon the remaining people, almost two-thirds of the human race, who are still exploited.

The hopes of the Western world were pinned on a similar "softening" occurring in China. Signs of the return of self-interest, corrupt practices, soft living and ignorance of the past turning out a young generation of driftwood consistency similar to the teenage generation in East European countries had been there. The Cultural Revolution, therefore was designed to make sure that the next generation, the young, would become fully revolutionary and "worthy successors of the Revolution".

Han Suyin explains that the movement for socialist education in the countryside was the concrete beginning of the Cultural Revolution. The socialist education movement in the countryside started on reports of conditions in the communes, which had revealed that the standards of socialist morality had slipped in certain areas. The movement was carried out by Army propaganda cadres, teachers, university staff, university students and artists. In 1963 the PLA produced a summary of the main political tasks in the Army and

stressed the need for "clean-up" operations in the communes. The operation was directed towards the abolition of the return of landlord ideas, material profit motivation and conduct, embezzlement, corruption and nepotism. The PLA under the command of Lin Piao, Han Suyin says, was successful in carrying out the clean-up operation which was needed because of the fact that in some communes the leadership had gone into partnership with ex-landlord families.

A significant development of the socialist education movement in the communes was the mass democracy process which accompanied it, the resurrection and invigoration of the poor and lower middle peasant associations which had been active during the period of the Red bases but had become dormant, a sign of hierarchization of authority. These associations now began to assault the entrenched bureaucracy and counter-revolutionaries and others who had "infiltrated" into the command structure. And since every movement is shaped by a theory, Han Suyin says, the reading, understanding and application of Mao's thinking became the foundation and theoretical basis of conduct, intent, behaviour and action in this movement, as it had been in the PLA under the direction of Lin Piao.

It is this mass movement in the countryside, the arising of mass organizations to clean up the party leadership at grass roots level, which can be regarded as the broad-based testing ground, predecessor and preparation for the Cultural Revolution. The latter, Han Suyin thinks, can only be successful when the first two steps, the clean-up in the PLA, and the clean-up in the communes, will be almost complete. Altogether two million people were involved in the socialist education and clean-up movements in the countryside from 1963

to 1964, another three million in 1965.

"Enemy without Guns"

In 1964 the movement spread to the cities. By that time the units or sectors, where authoritative leadership was actively propagating anti-Mao and revisionist ideas, had become known and clearly demarcated. Their spread in the cultural and propaganda sectors was clearly noticeable. According to Mao Tse-tung, this was "the enemy without guns", the enemy within the socialist system itself. This struggle between "proletarian culture" and "bourgeois culture" had gone on since 1942. In September 1962, and again in 1963, 1964 and 1965, Mao Tse-tung gave extremely important instructions on the question of the necessity for a Cultural Revolution, because very little had been done and problems abounded. "The exploiting classes have been disarmed, but their reactionary ideas remain rooted in their minds... We have confiscated their property, but cannot rid their minds of reactionary ideas... they invariably try to make use of their influence surviving from the past to shape public opinion in preparation for the political and economic restoration of capitalism...", Mao added.

Han Suyin thinks the Cultural Revolution will probably continue for another decade, with periods of upsurge and subsidence, with gradual shifting and refining of concepts, with the development of young leadership and the replacement of old cadres by enthusiastic young ones.

The mobilization of the masses means that the outstanding development, in the Cultural Revolution, is to be the setting up of revolutionary mass organizations to eradicate, within party organizations, those "persons in authority", who have been

guilty of deliberately promoting a return to the past, in short, the New Class and its ringleaders. This is, in effect, the first time in history that a communist party leadership aroused the revolutionary masses "against itself." While on tour in China Han Suyin was told by Madame Soong Ching-ling that they should arm themselves against "themselves": This means carrying mass democracy to the masses. Lenin's dictum—"We shall give the implementation of our revolutionary policies to the revolutionary masses"—was being realized in China since 1966.

Han Suyin describes the problem of youth in China as the problem of the future revolution, a question of world importance. Would the next generation, say by the year 2001, degenerate and ally itself with imperialism, return to selfishness, and become, as in so many other countries, frustrated and aimless? Would a New Class emerge, exploiting once again the Chinese peasantry? The question is not only important, it is urgent—as a whole new generation of young, over hundred million of them, is growing up, with no direct, concrete experiences of suffering and hardship or of the past exploitation. Perhaps keeping all these in his view Mao Tse-tung decided to involve the youths in the socialist education movement in the Cultural Revolution.

Role of Students

Han Suyin feels that this decision is neither astonishing nor unwise. On the contrary, it is farsighted—a masterly handling of an enormous problem, the problem of passing on the revolutionary aims and spirit to posterity. All through China's modern history, it is students and young people who have led revolutionary movements. In 1919 the 4 May Movement was led by young intellectuals, teachers and students, from the middle schools and the universities, and this was China's "first" great cultural revolution. All through the 1920s and the 1930s the most prominent feature of China's seething political scene was the revolt of the

young, innumerable demonstrations by students and young intellectuals, as in Latin America, India, even the USA today. In 1935, the 9 December Movement in Peking was entirely a student movement involving all the students of China. In 1926-7, Mao Tse-tung in his youth was to see the hurricane of the Peasant Revolution in Hunan. He watched the peasants actively supported by the students organizing their own peasant militias, overturning the established feudal landlordism, creating revolutionary committees and the Red Guards. Four decades later, he handed over to the next generation, the teenagers, the right to "make revolt" against the infiltrators in their own party, against those who wanted to restore the past and hamper the future, urging them to "dare to revolt". In 1966, Mao's faith in the eternal recurrence of the young and growing forces of life to overturn the old and sterile was reasserted, as a new generation arose, to become the "successors of the Revolution and pull down all fakes, all hierarchies, even in the party itself no matter how high. This, therefore, is no hasty impulsive action, opening the gates to "hooliganism", as reported so erroneously in the Western Press. Han Suyin observes that the Red Guards—the mobilization of youth—are not a sudden phenomenon, but a long-matured and well prepared strategic campaign to train revolutionary successors and a young revolutionary leadership, and at the same time to eradicate the attempts at reaction. "What China will be like in 2001, therefore, depends entirely on the Red Guards of today, on the Cultural Revolution today; what the world will be like in 2001 also depends on what happens in China today", she says.

The problem of training "successors of the revolution" has been placed as an important item since 1966 on the agenda by party committees at all levels, in accordance with directions given by the central committee and Mao Tse-tung. The central committee of the CPC in 1966

said, "The question of training successors for the revolutionary cause... is a matter of life and death for our party and our country. Unless the successors participate actively in revolutionary movements they will not know how to deal with future crises. There will and must be further revolutionary beginnings, as each generation takes up where the last one left off."

In 1966 Mao Tse-tung made his reappearance, in the middle of the Cultural Revolution, not only as the leader of the Communist Party of China but also as leader of the next generation.

The emphasis and trust in youth implies a complete reversal of the feudal tradition of docility, hierarchy and status. Mao's preoccupation with the "ageing" of the CPC has found an answer—new radical blood, unshackled by respect, daring to revolt and to reason comes to the fore. Mao writes that it is ideas which change the world; it is the masses, imbued with ideas, which carry out the change, and not brute force. The Red Guards of today are the generation who, in their millions, will have to defend the Revolution and its outcome.

Because of the importance given to Lin Piao, who is in command of the Army since the beginning of the socialist education movement culminating in the Cultural Revolution, some regard the present upheaval in China as a "military coup" and speak of a military dictatorship. Han Suyin, who observes this in a different way, says that the view of those people does not take into account the strategic significance of the enormous campaign, which is not only the culmination of the process of socialization of China over the last seventeen years, but also the taking in hand of the young generation, a concentration of effort for a material leap forward; an ideological "leap into a higher socialist level of humanity; and, last but not least, total preparedness, the material mobilization of the whole country and its resources for the almost inevitable war that is being im-

posed upon China through escalation in Vietnam.

Han Suyin states that the possibility of a revisionist coup against Mao's leadership has been removed by Lin Piao reasserting the political and ideological primacy of Mao Tse-tung's thought in the Army. The Chinese, therefore, do not regard the ascension of Lin Piao as a takeover but as the reassertion of ideological primacy over purely military ambitions. It is, therefore, logical in view of the overall situation, that the necessary political control over the Army and the latter's tradition as an inherent part of the people should be continued and reinforced. "Learn from the PLA" launched in 1964 was not a call to become militarized; but to remain on the same basis of perpetual semi-militarization as during the hard times of Yen-an and the Red base at Ching Kang-shan. "Boldly to nourish and select young cadres is the glorious tradition of the PLA", the Liberation Army Daily proclaimed on January 17, 1966. "The Red Guards will be the pool from which the future party members will be drawn. The Young Communist League and other youth organizations under the previous hierarchy are at the moment under scrutiny. The emphasis now is on mass democracy rather than on particular selection and this has abolished a good deal of the aura of superiority which surrounded Communist Party members", the Liberation Army Daily further said.

Reform of Education

The reform of education of new China was introduced in a dramatic way during the Cultural Revolution. At the close of 1966 all examinations were abolished and all universities and cultural institutions were closed for a year, while a thorough "shifting" of teachers and teaching material was in progress.

The creation of a mass based education, a part of the Cultural Revolution, has already begun to do away with the need for and reliance on bourgeois scholars and intellectuals that was evident in the first decade

after liberation. No longer ignorant, but scientifically minded and aware of political and social issues, the masses try to find their own creative answers to the problem of education. Under the new system of education, developed at the desire of the masses, senior middle school students are sent to spend a year or two among the workers, peasants and soldiers, in the communes, factories or army; there to temper themselves in the three revolutionary movements, the class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment. Fitness for university entrance is estimated by character and achievement, zeal and inventive spirit, and no longer by examinations, which "only turns out bookworms." Selected for enrolment will be those who have shown a "firm proletarian stand". Leadership material is chosen thus from among the Red Guards, from those who have used "reason", not "violence" in their actions; who have shown not only qualities of organization, initiative, originality, daring, but also "ability to unite with the people."

On June 13, 1966, the State Council and the central committee of the CPC issued a statement that the old system of entrance examination and enrolment of students in higher education institutions would be completely changed. Thus the examination system inaugurated during the Tang Dynasty was terminated as a "feudal" process of discrimination in 1966.

This radical departure from all the concepts of scholarly "authority", both Eastern and Western, Han Suyin says, will be interesting to watch in the next decade. "In the past a premium was placed on conformism, docility, the ability to memorize books; in the future, an emphasis on spontaneity, innovation, daring and refusal to obey tradition can only be welcomed as another sign of China's entry into the Space Age."

The situation at the close of 1966 during the most mature stage of the Cultural Revolution, Han Suyin says from her personal experiences, a vigorous and lively political situa-

tion initiated by Mao Tse-tung was taking shape throughout China, in which there were both centralism and democracy, both discipline and freedom, both unity of will and personal ease of mind. "However bewildering this may appear, all one can say about his unprecedented and massive experiment is that it is China's way of preparing herself for the future, both in war and in peace. If war should come, China's people will be prepared to fight a people's war; and if there is peace, to go on building for the millions, and a freedom of spirit which also has never existed in the past millennia."

While Han Suyin discusses the economic and social condition of the present-day China, particularly the Chinese life in the communes and the Cultural Revolution elaborately covering almost two-thirds of her 250-page book, she is strangely silent over China's military preparations finding a steady base in the event of continuous threat by the imperialist powers. Without referring to official documents she has simply made a sweeping comment saying that China's strides to nuclear power present today the most important military development of our time. She has of course said that building of a ballistic missile with a nuclear warhead means that China has now surpassed both England and France in the field of nuclear missiles and must be regarded as the "third nuclear power in the world."

In the beginning she shows how in twenty years under CPC rule the horizon of old China has been transformed into a new one. To reshape the social and economic condition of the country the communist leaders spearheaded by Mao Tse-tung, immediately after coming to power, took up two major programmes of collectivized socialist agriculture and setting up communes to promote a new level of consciousness among the people. The tremendous pace of economic change in China is felt when she says that production of steel in 1965 reached 18 million tones as against 40,000 tones in 1949. Since 1964 the food grain harvest which was below 200

million tones, has begun to increase and touched 220 million tones in 1966. "By 1966, it could not be denied even by the most prejudiced observer that China could achieve a national economy totally of her own; that it had made impressively good progress in seventeen years despite the setback of 1960-61, and that China was on the verge of an economic breakthrough."

In the preface Han Suyin admits that she is not a Marxist. And so her interpretation of some events and their motivation, her attempt to explain the Chinese way of grappling with their own situation and problems, may be faulted by a theoretician.

But she believes that the shape of Chinese society in the year 2001 can be predicted fairly accurately from present-day information and with this strong concept she shows how in twenty years the habits and horizons of two millennia have already been shattered and transformed.

(Concluded)

A Lunatics' Carnival

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

HOLIDAYING seems to be the best season for self-analysis and self-revelation for the Bengali film protagonists and as a bonus the audience gets some tourist views at no extra cost. On the whole, a good commercial proposition. So the writer-hero of *Swarna Sikhar Pranganey* is packed off to Darjeeling with a compartmentful of odd characters,

almost a pack of loonies. Predictably enough, everybody has a problem with which they confront the writer who in his turn gives all a patient hearing with a set, benign smile. All that is wanted is a confessional grill. Darjeeling, however, sorts out many of the minor problems, but the writer has yet to untie the biggest knot. Now enters Madhabi Mukherjee with a sullen and melancholic face and a clumsy flashback tells the story of her tragic life. Her husband, a top engineer, has time only for his job, and not for his wife and family. Hence the maladjustment and her consequent solitary sojourn. Naturally the writer has to rush to her rescue. Much persuasion follows, punctuated with some pretentious philosophic crap and stupid platitudes. Rolls in the repentant hubby asking for reconciliation. But none of this crap can heal the sore wounds nor does a timely song on the air cure the deep-rooted malady. Then a chase along the bends and cliffs of Darjeeling with the husband running after the wife and the daughter, a dense fog envelops the screen and we find the couple locked in solid embrace. And as a fitting finale the writer's close-up with the Colgate smile comes on the screen, as the happy family wanders off in the distance. His, indeed, are the hands of God. In fact, the bane of the film is this redundant character of the almighty writer, the most worn-out device of having a detached observer as a link between different episodes. He has nothing to contribute to the main structure of the film and his interpretations are always full of humbuggish self-complacency. The many sub-sections of the film are just routine padding and the Madhabi-Swarup relationship, forming its core, is a ponderous nothing. Both Madhabi Mukherjee and Swarup Dutta are miserably incompetent, inadequate and inexpressive. So are all the other characters excepting Subrata Chatterjee who is coy, buoyant and vivacious and her performance brings in a breath of fresh air into this lunatics' carnival.

Clippings

Banking On What ?

We have never believed that you can separate economics from politics. The Dudley Senanayake Government was the pet child of the World Bank. They kept him afloat and the result was that, instead of our position improving, it became infinitely worse. It seems you can raise money from anyone if you are a hot favourite of the World Bank. But who is going to pay off these loans? Neither Mr Dudley Senanayake nor Dr Corea, apparently. The people of this country have to repay these loans, part of which went into the pockets of UNP racketeers. We have reached the point at which a vital decision has to be taken. For one thing, we may not be able to repay these loans. That means that we are bankrupt and will be advertised among the international money-lenders as a bankrupt nation. Where do we go from there?

Do we have an alternative to bowing before the economics of the Fund and devaluing our currency once again? We think there is but it is not a path strewn with roses. Still, if the question is one of either taking that road or surrendering our sovereignty, there can be no choice. For this question of sovereignty is not just a matter of political demagoguery but a very real one. It is all the more dangerous because it is one that comes in unobtrusively and barely noticeable to economists and administrators who barter it away.

...But the lesson has not yet got home—to judge by the style in which people continue to get married, to get buried and to get drunk. It is our firm belief that far more drastic measures are needed. For instance, we suggest that petrol should be rationed and our way of life generally put on a war footing. If we are seeking a new discipline, if we are striving to raise productivity by getting people to work—we have to show that everybody

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is making the sacrifice. Here we are, on the verge of bankruptcy, and no one seems to give a damn. Christmas is in the air, the shopping centres are filling-up to bursting point and the new currency notes are flying gaily around. This nonsense must stop. (*The Nation*, Colombo, December 10, 1970.)

Merrymakers in Delhi

As the spry seventies got off the mark, people ushered in 1971 with boisterous gaiety (in Delhi). Hundreds of smartly-turned-out men and women swanked almost all night at gayly-decorated hotels and restaurants. The whiz and the zest of the merry-makers reached a crescendo as the lights at midnight dipped to announce the coming of the New Year. Even total strangers hugged and wished each other a "Happy New Year", and the flying festoons carried the message to everybody around. To keep up with the pace of the dancers, the bands had to change their rhythm from the waltz, the fox trot, the tango, the cha-cha to rock'n roll. It trailed into the small hours of the morning.

The chandeliered dining halls of posh hotels were generally well decorated. The tables were sold out much in advance, and many were just content with standing room... Floor shows—"little teasing and no stripping"—cost much more to watch than it did last year. Table charges ranged from Rs 100 to Rs 200 for a couple. Over a thousand seats were sold in advance. (*The Times of India*)

Crisis In Education

The "crisis in higher education" has led to a paradoxical situation. There is "over production" by nearly 50 per cent in educated personnel. Enrolment in universities has shown a 13 per cent annual increase while the level of literacy has expanded by only one per cent per annum.

This crisis was the subject of... Patel Memorial Lectures delivered recently at Madras by Dr K. N. Raj, former Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University.

The solution to the crisis, Dr Raj emphasised, lies not only in an immediate structural reform of higher education but, also, in a reorientation of the entire educational planning with greater emphasis on primary education.

Pointing to the fourfold increase in enrolment from 1952 to 1970, he said this was well above the educated manpower requirements.

...With the present trends the glut is reaching crisis proportions..

The heavily subsidised nature of secondary education, Dr Raj felt, was one of the main reasons for the numbers explosion and the subsidy coming as it does at the cost of primary education, was not warranted by economic considerations.

Under the present allocation of resources, higher education and primary education get nearly the same resources whereas the need is far greater at the level of primary education if basic commitments like national literacy are to be met.

...On the policy front, the growing influence of regionalism has had an adverse effect on higher education, "diluting its content."

Dismissing the "anti-elitism theory," which advocates instruction through regional languages, Dr Raj felt that the elite classes remain intact "for the simple reason that there has been no revolutionary change in economic or social system; indeed they have grown in numbers and in influence." (*The Hindustan Times*)

Trouble In Poland

The policies of Mr Wladyslaw Gomułka, the Police communist leader, came under withering criticism (in Warsaw) in press articles accusing him by implication of ruling autocratically.

A commentary by the official news agency P.A.P. said that workers' demonstrations over increased food prices which led to bloody street clashes in Baltic coastal towns last week were "an expression of certain deeper conflict or even crisis".

In its commentary PAP enlarged on the point of "premises for a

situation of conflict" by saying: "for a situation of conflict" by saying: "They derived from decisions, sometimes arbitrary, concerning economic matters, from lack of deepened dialogue with the working class on problems of such great complexity as economics, the functioning of economy and management, and ways of implementing development plans and determining perspectives."

...P.A.P. blamed the former leadership for hastily implementing ill-considered economic concepts, not knowing what the workers thought, "and above all being ignorant or unwilling to see results which were often unfavourable and harmful".

All this caused a situation which deepened disharmony between the authorities and the working masses. "The crisis which formed against this background was deepened by ignoring existing opinions and attitudes". (Agency report)

Debray After Release

Mr Regis Debray...said...as he left gaol:

"Confinement shatters your nerves sometimes. You throw yourself against the walls like a caged animal. And anyway, I am a manic depressive.

"But my morale became better than it was two years ago".

He said that he had been distressed by the publication of interviews which had distorted his words...

"This role of a kind of star is repugnant to me", he said. "Life, like death, is an injustice. In Bolivia men have fallen in battle, and most of them are already nameless.

"They were extraordinary militants whom I knew when they were alive and who deserve the attention of journalists, a thousand times more than me.

"One day, I'll speak about those I knew, well or not very well, and who shall never leave this earth." (*The Times*)

No Family Planning

Party workers in the powerful Awami League...make it clear that they will not tolerate a family plan-

ning programme which will reduce their margin of representation.

"If they think they can fool us into keeping our population down while West Pakistan's goes up, they are wrong. We shall never accept that", a young urban party worker said. (*The Times*)

Letters

The Principal Contradiction

There is a debate going on, though not extensively, regarding the principal contradiction in India. According to some, the basic contradictions like the one between feudalism and the masses of peasantry, and the bourgeoisie and the proletariat can be contained within the contradiction between imperialism and the people of India as a whole. Thereby they deny the CPI(ML) contention that the principal contradiction is the one between feudalism and the peasantry. Though we disagree with the CPI(ML) on the question of the tactics of the Indian revolution, we find that its position on the question of the principal contradiction stands valid today. How?

There are five basic contradictions found in the present Indian society. They are: Between feudalism and the masses of the peasantry; between imperialism and the people of India as a whole; between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; between the various nationalities in India (that presents itself in the form of linguistic and regional conflicts); between the comprador monopoly bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie.

Of these five basic contradictions, which is the principal one?

If one puts it that all the contradictions can be merged into a single whole that find its expression in the single basic contradiction (between imperialism and the people of India as a whole) it will be a blunder of over-simplification. The reason given for such over-simplification is that the classes that form the main enemies of the people (that is, the feudal landlord class and the

comprador bourgeoisie) are the main props of imperialism in our country. The plea is that imperialism solely relies on these traitorous classes and rules India through them. Accordingly, no distinction can be made between the contradiction between feudalism and the peasantry and the contradiction between imperialism and the people of India taken as a whole. And it is argued that the other four contradictions are inherently linked up with the contradiction between imperialism and the people of India.

No Marxist should ever forget that the various aspects of a thing or a phenomenon should not be seen as isolated facts or aspects. He cannot deny the fact of the interconnections between the different basic contradictions in India that were mentioned earlier. That is, the different basic contradictions cannot be separated in the absolute sense. To do so will be metaphysical and a folly.

It is true that the contradiction between imperialism and the oppressed nations is the principal contradiction at present when the world as a whole is taken. It does not mean the same is true in cases of individual nations and countries. In the latter case, it varies. For instance, the principal contradiction in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and so on is the one between imperialism and the oppressed nations. Because imperialists are involved *directly* in military adventures besides the direct hold on other walks of life. While there is direct involvement of the forces of imperialism a nation or country can only be a colony (might be of the classical or modern type). But in the case of so many other countries, for instance, many of the Commonwealth countries like India, Ceylon, Pakistan, Burma, and those like Indonesia and so on which have *formal* independence, their economic, military and political activities are virtually controlled by imperialism headed by the U.S. In their case the imperialists have not committed their aggressive armed forces and therefore

rule *indirectly*. Also, the Soviet social-imperialists rule *indirectly* the countries of Eastern Europe and Outer Mongolia. They are also indirect colonies. The said two types or forms of indirect colonial rule are termed as neo-colonialism. Again the advanced capitalist imperialist countries like Britain, West Germany, Japan etc. are virtually under the dictates of the U.S. imperialists. But they are not reduced to the position of a new type colony. They are vassals and have certain shares and a partnership with the US imperialists so far as the world market is concerned. A vassal cannot be termed a neo-colony just as a child cannot be called a man though it has features of resemblance and is in the process of becoming a man.

As regards the two concepts of people's democracy and national democracy things are not made clear and, therefore, the distinctions and similarities between people's democratic revolution and national democratic revolution are not grasped by many. It should be said that people's democratic revolution and national democratic revolution are the same as regards the fact that both are, in essence, the bourgeois democratic revolution in a colonial or semi-colonial country of the East, and are definitely led not by the native or com-

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BOOK YOUR ORDERS EARLY

prator bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie or any other class. It is the bourgeois democratic revolution led by the proletariat. It is typical of the East. And the condition is that the bourgeois democratic revolution is an integral part of the proletarian world revolution in the present era (particularly after World War II).

Then what are the features that differentiate people's democratic revolution from national democratic revolution?

If the contradiction in any colony or semi-colony that is feudal or semi-feudal is the one between feudalism and its vast peasantry, it is solved only through a civil war centred around the agrarian problems. That is, agrarian revolution will be the main axis of revolution in that particular country or nation. It has the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist task. In this case a united-front led by the proletariat will comprise all the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist classes and forces including the progressive sections of the national bourgeoisie. That is, the characteristic of such a people's democratic revolution should be the fact that the principal contradiction in a country or nation is the one between feudalism and the vast peasantry under the leadership of the proletariat.

The national democratic revolution too is pivoted around the agrarian revolution. But the main content is anti-imperialist. That is, while the anti-feudal aspect is stressed over the anti-imperialist task in a people's democratic revolution it is the reverse in a national democratic revolution. That is why in old China and Vietnam when they faced the common enemy from outside, agrarian reforms through the seizure of land by force were limited to reducing the land rent and the interest rate. The factor that mainly characterises the national democratic revolution is that the principal contradiction is the one between imperialist aggression and the nation as a whole. This contradiction is, primarily, solved through a national liberation war.

The people's democratic revolution

and the national democratic revolution are identical. The main difference being the principal contradiction and the eventual composition of the united front of all the revolutionary classes around the proletariat. That is, the united front in case of a national democratic revolution will be broader when compared to that of a people's democratic revolution. As a result all anti-imperialist forces, including the lower and middle bourgeoisie and the landlord class of lower strata, will be included in a national democratic revolution.

Also, the principal contradiction is bound to change. As a result the revolution in any country of the East may be commuted from people's democratic to national democratic and vice versa. Unless we grasp at what stage our revolution is we cannot evolve the relative strategy and tactics in order to carry forward the Indian revolution to its final victory.

S. GUNASELAN
Bangalore

India's China War

R. C. Ayer is surely in error when, in his very full and open-minded appraisal of Neville Maxwell's *India's China War* (November 21, 1970), he refers to Tawang as lying north of the so-called McMahon Line. Though lying well to the south of it, Tawang was under the effective jurisdiction of the Tibetan authorities, who were sought to be evicted by force in 1938, by a British expedition led by Captain Lightfoot, Political Officer, Balipara. There was considerable resentment in Lhasa at such high-handed behaviour and Lightfoot withdrew.

For the British, the McMahon Line had little of the odour of sanctity which it came to acquire under the Nehru regime. Indeed, in the 1940s they had drawn up plans to modify the McMahon Line and accept Tibetan sovereignty over Tawang. When in 1951, the Government of India decided to reoccupy Tawang the Chinese, perhaps, thought their silence would be accepted as an ac-

commodating gesture by Indian leaders—a pardonable enough error since, till then, they had little experience of the mentality of these leaders.

Maxwell's exposure of Nehru's own responsibility for the steady worsening of Sino-Indian relations is quite devastating. Neither the comforting explanations of right-wing pressure nor the malevolent behind-the-scene presence of Krishna Menon can ever again suffice. We see Nehru for what he was. A man bereft of solid achievements, he hardly bears comparison with Nasser, or even Sukarno.

The Lok Sabha fares little better; no patrician dignity here, only loud bombast, the boorish boastfulness of parvenus struggling to prove worthy successors of the Raj. And so to the Press: courtiers without conscience or scruple, grovellers and hangers on, as much part of the political landscape as the banias and gomastas of the East India Company's Bengal. Their squeals of rage at Maxwell become all the more understandable.

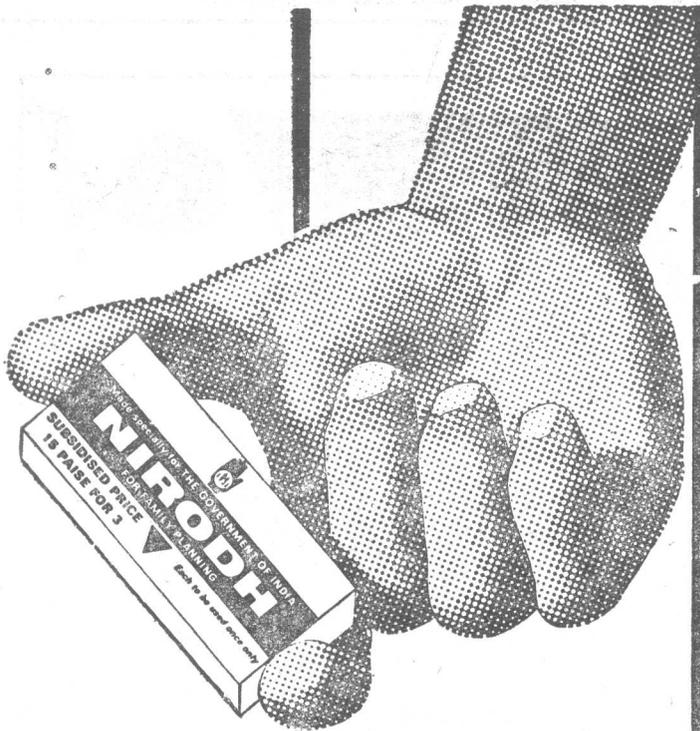
Maxwell set out to tell the story of India's China War and this he has done brilliantly. Even more, he has given us a superb miniature of politics and politicians in post-independence India. Few books have captured the spirit of the Nehru administration so well.

PREMEN ADDY,
London.

Police See Astrologers

So long the police dog Lucky and CPM men were the main helping hands of the police in tracking down the Naxalites. But believe it or not, sir, the police have also requisitioned the services of astrologers in detecting the Naxalites. At least one particular example I can cite. Recently a police officer paid a visit to a famous astrologer in South Calcutta at S. P. Mukherjee Road-Hazra Road junction and asked him to foretell of the presence of Naxalites in that region. Where intelligence fails astrology begins!

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