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Editor : Samar Sen

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BY SAMAR SEN FROM 61, MOTT LANE,
CALCUTTA-13
TELEPHONE: 243202

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

THE Prime Minister was at times rattled and lost her temper during her last election tour of West Bengal. The promises—including a windfall of Rs 140 crores if West Bengal behaved, and the veiled threats if it did not, seemed to confirm rumours that Central intelligence forecasts of election trends were none too optimistic for West Bengal.

Loyalists, however, had no reason to be unduly alarmed. This Government, it should have been clear after the performance against Pakistan, excels at contingency planning against external enemies and internal adversaries. Extra-parliamentary action against extremists, after a period of hesitation and bewilderment, was a matter of infiltration, division and ruthless use of guns and preventive detention. But planning against parliamentary parties was bound to be a little awkward—some rules of the game had to be seemingly observed. Very little, however, was left to chance. The party in power has many advantages; nevertheless, many loopholes had to be plugged. From the selection and screening of polling personnel to the deployment of the young roughs in and outside polling booths and near the houses of the opposition parties, under the protection of the police, the operation was marvellous. Huge numbers of people just could not vote. Of course, every party daydreams of a situation in which mass false voting for it can go on without any interference. But a widespread and vigorous combination of false voting and armed intimidation in which the administration is also involved is beyond the scope of any opposition party. The Left Front, angry and frustrated like the Pakistani jawans in Bangladesh, must also have marvelled at the strategy and tactics of the Congress.

What we have written so far will not be believed by most people outside West Bengal and this country, in view of the Indira wave that is sweeping the Indian part of the subcontinent. Just because the authorities knew that the Indira wave was there to explain away many things, they could go in for naked and unashamed rigging and intimidation and get away with anything.

But wasn't there, if not a tidal wave, a strong undercurrent in favour of Mrs Gandhi, despite the fact that her government has not done anything for the people? Power attracts, particularly when it has been effectively used elsewhere. True, the Centre has subjected West Bengal

to a long process of deprivation. But the Leftists, who speak of confrontation with the Centre, dropped it altogether during their two stints in office. So people might have been tempted to back a party that can deliver the goods—give the bosses another chance. The other device in the Leftist armoury was emphasis on the brutality of the Congress. But this was overdone and done in a non-political way. Most of the campaign, to be frank, appealed to emotion and sentiment and was devoid of politics. But whatever the pro-Indira swing was, it was given a hefty push by swindlers. The mind of the people will remain a mystery.

The ruling party has proved that elections are a farce. How the CPM leadership will react to the situation remains to be seen. Any number of petitions to the Election Commissioner will not bring back to life those who have been lost in the unseemly, unending battle of the ballot-box.

(This, and the comment that follows, were sent to the press on Monday morning, hours before results began to come in. One or two sentences have been added later).

Sinews Of Election

A daily newspaper in West Bengal published everyday last week photostat copies of some interesting documents. One document revealed that the INTUC leader in Panihati had asked for immediate despatch of light and heavy bombs and a few chaps to improve the electoral prospects in his locality! Another revealed that Duncan Brothers had placed an order with a famous printing press for eight hundred thousand election posters in five languages on maplitho. The press charged Rs. 100 per 1,000 copies. The documents indicated that the press had printed for the same party election posters of other designs a couple of days earlier. Still another document revealed that an o.c.e-bearer of the North Calcutta District Youth Congress directed the District Election

Officer of Howrah to relieve a certain presiding officer from his assigned constituency because the officer was badly needed in the North Calcutta constituency.

These give a fair enough idea regarding the sinews of elections held on March 11 in the State, as well as elsewhere.

To conduct free and fair elections the State Government fielded in West Bengal a strength which, Governor Dias boasted, surpassed that of the army in any sector during the 1965 Indo-Pak war. This was in addition to the police and armed police, national volunteer forces and home guards. To conduct this free and fair poll, 6,000 leftist election workers were arrested without trial last week, which took the total of people arrested without trial in the State to 32,600. Four thousand leftist election workers and their families were externed from the localities by the local roughs. The CPM could not appoint polling agents in 96 centres out of 171 because it feared that the agents would be killed by either the police or the roughs or both.

Mrs Gandhi came to the State on a whistle-stop campaign and addressed a score of gatherings. At the Tallah gathering PWD workers worked for 10 days to prepare for the election meeting and that cost the State exchequer 1.5 hundred thousand rupees. Rs. 44,000 was spent for the Chinsurah meeting, Rs. 50,000 for a North Bengal meeting. The cost of these was borne by the State Government, because of the principle that any visit and meeting of the Prime Minister is the charge of the Government.

The election was preceded by a week of planned murders. In Dum Dum, the CPM alleged, 30 were murdered when a Congress procession was taken out. The Government admitted that the toll was six and heaved a sigh of relief that it was not more. In Belgachia, three Congress workers, alias wagon breakers, were killed in the process of preparing bombs, and the local Congress workers were de-

pressed at the thought that the polling booths would go unmanned during the election. The number of clashes, in which the CPM was mostly the victim, including its front-rank leaders, is legion.

The net result: the CPM seemed to have lost the battle by the time the election was halfway through. After midday, voters in most booths came back to find that the trouble of voting was very considerably taken by people who hoped eventually to run the Government and the State.

This is the sort of election that the CPM had been clamouring for. Not that elections are fair anytime anywhere in the world. But what happened in the Saturday election was all brazen. This was a sort of mass copying in examination halls. The genuine voters were held back, genuine ballot papers were lifted out of the boxes in sheaves and others put in, 'duly' signed or thumbbed. Not that it was Congress all the way. The CPM had its own share in the election game. But it was outmanoeuvred well and good. The CPM which claims that it is the largest mass party in the State with hundreds and thousands of dedicated workers trained to face all hardships for the cause of revolution could not face the threat of roughs. It collapsed before the joint thrust from the Congress workers, buttressed by the chosen roughs and blessed by the Government. Not that facing the threat squarely was worthwhile. But the CPM, which opted for the election, could have fought for the election to prove its credentials. It did not. It could not.

March 11

A correspondent writes:

What happened on March 11 in the name of a peaceful and impartial election was an elaborate hoax. It was a shameless exposure of the fascist character of the ruling party.

Rigging elections is nothing new in Indian politics. Almost all political parties, whether big or small,

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have acquired a special efficiency in it—a matter of envy to the politicians of other countries. But the incidents of March 11 were without parallel. Never before had the meaning of rigging elections become so clear in the literary sense, nor did the voters ever have such a bitter experience. The leaders and workers of the ruling Congress have proved beyond doubt that they are a class by themselves. The entire bureaucratic machinery, the police and even the army were mobilised to help known gangsters make the poll an all-out success for the ruling Congress. The Governor of the State, Mr A. L. Dias, repeatedly assured people that this time only “goody, goody” officials would be sent to polling centres together with “goody, goody” policemen. Thanks to him, once again the bureaucrats and the police have proved their bona fides. Here are some titbits:

A polling booth in Central Calcutta. An old man enters the room to cast his vote. The polling officer insists that he should vote Congress. The old man protests and argues that he has every right to vote freely. He is heard saying, “Is it not my fundamental right to vote for the man I like?” The polling officer replies “And it is also my fundamental right to see that you do not misuse your fundamental right... Now stop arguing and put a mark here”. He points to the Cow-and-calf. The old man obeys.

Same booth. Four women voters enter the room one after another and cast their votes on behalf of four male voters. The agent of the opposition party sits idly, with his eyes fixed on the ceiling.

Same booth, time 4-30 p.m. About six or seven males enter, introduce themselves in the names of some women voters. The polling officer says, “oh, yes, yes, everything is correct, do vote, my boys.” The opposition party's agent is seen cleaning his finger nails with a matchstick. Peaceful polling in all respects.

A polling booth in the Tollygunje

area. A woman aged about 55 or 60 comes in. The Congress agent asks the polling officer to help her to put a mark on the Congress symbol. The woman says, “My boy, I am the mother of five, please do let me vote according to my choice”. The agent replies, “So what? Whoever gets married gives birth to a baby” (he makes an ugly gesture), “but politics is a different thing, so vote for the man I suggest”. The woman obliges. She is seen sobbing.

Another booth, same constituency. Three young men, clad in khadi kurta and cowboy pants, enter with a list of names with them. One goes to the polling officer and says in a low voice, “Give us ballot papers against these names. The bastards will not turn up.” The officer smiles and obliges him. The boys then put their party symbol on the ballot papers, drop them into the ballot box and go away. The opposition party's agent, most probably a CPM man, starts arguing with the polling officer. He talks in a loud voice. Those Congress boys reenter the room and tell him to get out. They say, “Don't cry yourself hoarse, just sit and watch. If you don't like things you can go out. But if we hear you shout again, then”... they point to some gunmen waiting outside.

Guns and Bombs

Guns and explosives were used with almost carefree abandon in Beliaghata, Baranagar and Dum Dum on March 11.

A polling booth in Dum Dum. Some people queue up before the booth. About seven Congress volunteers carrying sten-guns and pipe-guns order them to disperse. The voters do not dare protest, and leave. One of the volunteers is heard saying, “Flocks of sheep, even a child can tackle them.” A large number of police and CRP, standing near by, seem to be enjoying the scene very much.

A polling booth in Baranagar. The same khadi-clad gunmen place the barrels of their guns on the chest of

the CPM agent and say, “Look. This is meant for you. Whatever we want to do, let us do it undisturbed.”

As the CPM agent sits down in utter hopelessness, they begin to laugh loudly, “Alright, my boy, please be seated till the polling ends.”

A polling booth in Beliaghata. A young voter comes in. The polling officer gives him a pencil to write down his signature. The young man says, “Please give me a pen”. “I may give you this one”, a man inside the room shows him a bullet. The boy does not argue any longer. As soon as he leaves, the polling officer erases his name with an eraser. The Congress agent appreciates the officer's intelligence and says “sabash”.

It was fear of death and humiliation which forced the voters of the Left Front to give up the hope of voting for their candidates. Congress gunmen and police guarding CPM dens in Baranagar, Dum Dum, Jadavpur and Beliaghata were a common scene on March 11. The armed Congress volunteers moved from house to house and warned the inmates not to go out on the polling day. “Whoever defies us will not remain alive, mind it”, they said.

Absence of pro-left voters however did not affect the total turn-out. Thousands of false votes were cast by the sentinels of “ganatantra” and “samajbad”.

After the polling, it is reported by some polling officers, large numbers of Congress “volunteers” entered the booths and changed the ballot papers. At one polling booth in north 24-Parganas “polling” started on Friday night.

At least some high-ranking police officers will be rewarded for their service to the nation. Really, they have done a lot. Here is an instance. At about 10.30 a.m. the officers-in-charge of Tollygunge and Jadavpur announced over the telephone the death of two Congressmen. This no doubt made the situation in the local polling booths more tense and so more “fake voters” were dispersed. But later in the afternoon those Congressmen were found alive.

The role of the local news dailies was as remarkable as that of the police. They found nothing abnormal on March 11. On the contrary they praised in chorus the Congress for the peaceful, impartial polling. No use of going into the details. It is a sad tally, all told.

The situation is complicated, otherwise too. Why were so many cars from Bangladesh found every evening in front of the Congress headquarters? Just arrived, covered with dust, what did they carry? That Bangladesh volunteers of the Awami League, the Muzaffar NAP and Moni Singh group came and asked Muslims to vote Congress is another matter—they are all under the banyan tree of the Soviet Union.

The Sudan Agreement

An agreement has been reached between the Sudanese Government and the southern secessionists to end the civil war and negotiate for a political settlement. When President Numeiry assumed power in 1969 he had two thorny problems to solve—the Sudanese Communist Party and the southern rebellion. Last year Numeiry cracked down on the communists after an abortive left-wing coup and the world had glimpses of his ruthlessness. But he did not succeed in crushing the southern insurgency. The insurgents, from the desolate countryside of south Sudan, continued their armed opposition. Over the years the Anyanya guerillas built up a 10,000 strong army.

The south has reasons to be sceptical about the north's intentions. Its economic growth has been stunted

and its huge labour force living in the north has been made to live in shanty towns as aliens. The south urgently sought an end to the northern greediness and demanded political self-rule—a federation type system in which it would have equal status with the North. But Khartoum proposed regional autonomy within the existing set-up. In a package deal it offered a regional assembly and an executive council that would ensure complete independence for the south in its internal affairs and give it advisory powers in all central legislation relating to the south except defence, communication and immigration. The southerners rejected it. The outcome was a political stalemate leading to continuation of the shooting war. After years of civil war Khartoum, however, realised the determination of the south to defeat its strongarm tactics and came out with the new proposal which, though modelled on its own formula, made important concessions to the southern claim for political self-rule. The new package looks more like a confederal system of government.

But what prompted the Anyanya guerillas to leave their jungle hide-outs and negotiate peace with the Numeiry regime? Do they seriously think that the President is willing or can afford to safeguard their interests once the hostilities cease and the guerillas lay down arms? The guerillas have their problems. They fought the civil war creditably, but not Numeiry's new diplomatic offensive. For example, the new bonhomie between Sudan and Ethiopia has threatened their arms supplies from Israel. Then in the south Uganda's Idi Amin, who has suddenly found reasons to woo Khartoum, has grown apathetic to the guerillas' cause. The new development has tended to limit seriously their military potentialities and induced them to negotiate.

Though the agreement has removed the immediate causes of the conflict, many problems remain. The most important is the phasing out of

the northern garrison from the south and rehabilitation of the disarmed Anyanya fighters without jeopardising their sense of security. Then there are the returning refugees. The President has shown a keen sense of political pragmatism by agreeing to negotiate. But it remains to be seen how he integrates the southern guerillas and the northern army. The rightists in the army have already begun to bully the President for capitulation; some among the southerners are not happy too.

In A Quandary

The Japanese are in a quandary in regard to China. Not given to diplomatic punctiliousness where moral issues are involved, the Chinese have not replied to letters from Tokyo, let alone agree to talk. What has stood in the way of a meeting between the two countries is the existence of a peace treaty between Taiwan and Japan. There was never any doubt that Japan's recognition of the legitimacy of the Government in Peking was not enough; the Chinese cannot show any interest in a dialogue till Peking has been recognised as the sole Government of China and Japan has abrogated its very special relationship with Taiwan. But the Japanese Government enjoying the affection of the U.S. Administration was also not in a hurry; the series of political and economic shocks that were administered by President Nixon since July had, however, willy-nilly made Tokyo undertake a thorough review of its whole gamut of foreign policy. That the process is not yet complete is confirmed by the inconsistent statements of Japanese leaders. Perhaps the evolution of a new policy has to wait till the retirement of Mr Eisaku Sato, for the man is too closely identified with American interests. The Chou-Nixon communique was the signal for him to make a new announcement on Taiwan. There would have been no surprise if he had repeated what

For FRONTIER contact

S. P. CHATTERJEE

Statesman Office

Steel Market

Durgapur-4

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President Nixon said but the declaration in the Diet that Taiwan is "part of the People's Republic of China" is really a big advancement on the American position. But has not Mr Takeo Fukuda, the Foreign Minister, who claims that Japan is ahead of the USA so far as China is concerned, said, like the Americans, that "Taiwan is part of China"? These conflicting statements which are meant for domestic consumption have recoiled on the Government. It has now promised to announce a consistent China policy.

In the postwar years the Japanese have always maintained a low profile in the diplomatic field. The economic animal of Asia thought that its penetration in world markets would be easier if it continued to play second fiddle to America. The price it paid was the acceptance of American military presence and the identification of the security of South Korea and Taiwan with its own security. If America has lost interest in Japan, it is because of the realisation of the futility of pursuing any longer a China containment policy and its own economic difficulties. Smarting under the feeling of abandonment the Japanese have of late made a number of spectacular diplomatic moves which include despatching an official mission to Hanoi and a parliamentary delegation to Pyongyang and giving a warm reception to Mr Andrei Gromyko. The Japanese export-import bank has been allowed to give credits to China. (This may have been prompted by the fear that America will soon regain its pre-war share of the China trade at the expense of Japan.) What is more, the Sato Cabinet has decided that Japan should criticise itself over the war with China in the 'thirties. The foreign policy options are clear before Japan but the selection of a definite course is going to be agonising. It could either decide to develop a new relationship with Russia in order to balance the loss of American interest in it; or it could decide to go it alone or it could cleave to the old policy of hitching its wagon to the USA.

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Letter From Mizoram

From A Correspondent

MIZORAM (Mizoland), an area of 21,090 sq. km., was born on January 21, 1972. The people, 321,686 strong, are not happy with their Union Territory status. However, some people think that this status would be the best for them at this stage of their frustrated economy, as the Centre would be responsible for the development of the region until a popular government is formed, perhaps by the middle of April this year. The government of Mizoram is run by an Administrator with the help of some secretaries.

Mizoram was a district in Assam till January 20, 1972. It became a district area in March 1966 because of the armed uprising in the region by some sections of the people for a sovereign independent State. In fact the district has been having a popular autonomous council since 1952. However, after the 1966 trouble the administration was almost entirely in the hands of the Security Forces and the Deputy Commissioner. Surprisingly during the most troubled time a power fight between the civil administration and the Security Forces made the people suffer heavily.

Things that may be comparable to My Lai and the activities of the Pakistan army in Bangladesh have hap-

pened in the then Mizo District and are known to the inhabitants of the land but not to people outside. That is why the newly born Students' Federation suggested to the Prime Minister of India when she visited the capital of Mizoram on January 2 that adequate compensation should be paid to innocent civilian victims of circumstances whose houses and belongings were burnt or destroyed for no fault of their own during the disturbances (1966-1969).

The Deputy Commissioner (in the rest of India called District Magistrate) handles a huge amount of money for the development etc. of the people. Knowing the simplicity of the Mizos, he has done so much that the Mizos as a whole will never forget him. There are some institutions named after him. The Mizos have nicknamed him 'Machhipp-chhuana' (bald head). He is a man of action. Once he went to a shop where one salesman did not know who he was. So he treated the hero of the District as an ordinary person. The result, after a few hours he was in police custody.

The Mizos as a whole have even now a strong inclination towards an independent statehood. However, they cannot achieve this within a short time. As such the people have become loyal to the Government. But for how long? That, of course, is the question.

College Elections : A Case Study

BY A STUDENT CORRESPONDENT

TO the long series of "massive victories" scored by the Chhatra Parishad (CP) in one college union after another, one more—and a significant one at that—has been added. Presidency College, that old citadel of knowledge and wisdom, after being menaced by "Naxalite" violence for a considerable period, has at last been restored to its former glory

through the sweeping victory of the followers of "democratic socialism" in the students union election held on February 25.

The story of how this came about sheds some light on all such victories in recent days.

In the present phase, the CP, with a handful (less than 10) of students from within and a wide number

from outside, appeared in Presidency College at the beginning of this year, with the declared (through leaflets, posters, wall-writing) purpose of restoring peace on the college campus. Of course, for at least one and a half years, with the majority of the "Naxalite" cadres arrested or underground and with police pickets in college premises, there is no "trouble" to be dealt with any longer. A movement, without any political overtones whatsoever, of the common students, based on some common grievances was on at that time. After their failure to bring the movement under their organisational banner, CP workers, with the help of their anti-social friends, began to intimidate the students, threatening to throw away their corpses—'las fele debo', as they put it—if they are not obeyed, and describing the organisers of the movement as "goondas", "Naxalites" etc. Girl participants in the movement were also heckled. Police, ever present within the campus, were mute spectators.

At this point, the college authorities suddenly became very zealous to restore to the students their democratic right—suspended for years—of forming a union and February 25 was declared as the date for the election. Later, it became known that this was done at the instruction of the CP leaders. Obviously, the moment was thought to be the most opportune for the purpose. February 17 was the last date for submission of nomination papers.

Under the very eyes of the authorities and the police anti-social elements intruded into the campus and intimidation of students became a routine affair. Even girls were not spared. Short of physical assault, all other methods of humiliation, calling them names in the filthiest language possible, making most indecent gestures to them etc., continued. CP hoodlums declared that none would be allowed to contest the CP in the election and no other organization would be allowed to function.

Why so much sabre-rattling while it was known to all, including the CP, that for a few years there had been no functioning organisation within the college? Because, though the majority of students had no definite political commitment, as is usually the case, they at the same time refused to join the ranks of the CP. Hence, the attempt to force them to do so. But the attempt boomeranged, and a large number of students without any political past whatsoever, resolved to oppose the CP as independent candidates. The situation became so tough for the CP ringleaders that in a majority of classes they could not find students voluntarily agreeing to contest for them. So here also a liberal dose of force was resorted to. It was evident that in case of a free and fair election the CP would be smashed. They understood it well and became desperate.

On the 17th i.e. the last date for nomination, about 40 to 50 CP hoodlums from outside, armed with things like revolvers, swords and daggers, assembled around the box meant for dropping the nomination papers and snatched these from opposition candidates coming to file theirs and tore them off. Of course the opposition boys were abused in the filthiest possible words, shown weapons and told of the dire consequences. Then they began to stamp around in search of those who had already submitted their nomination papers. Boys were dragged out of their respective classes in full view of others, taken to the college canteen and under a heavy shower of abuse and threats were forced to withdraw their candidature. The police, for some mysterious reasons, moved away from the place where the process of "democratisation" of recalcitrants was going on. Thus the first phase of electioneering was completed, with only a few candidates selected by the CP to oppose itself (how democratic!) left in the field. But the candidates along with other students refused to bow down. Their protest this time took a novel form.

On the 23rd morning, students coming to the college saw to their amazement the walls of the college building full of chalk writing calling upon them to protest against the farcial election and expose the misdeeds of the CP. The CP leaders were furious. They dragged one student to a latrine and gave him a good hiding and threatened 30 to 40 boys—who refused to erase the writing at the CP's order—that they would not be allowed to enter the college. The news spread like a forest-fire and students, including a large number of girls, came out of their classes and marched towards the Principal's room to demand protection from the CP hoodlums. The Principal was not in his room. Six to seven CP workers entered his room and ordered the students to leave it. They refused. Then the CP workers tried to force the students out and a hand fight followed. The CP workers were almost cornered, when the Principal along with the police force including officers, entered the arena. Fighting stopped. Students put forward their vehement protest before the police officers. Particularly girls complained about the worst forms of indecent treatment meted out to them. But the police officers refused to give any promise of protection and went to meet the Principal, away from the students.

Outside, the students surrounded the CP workers and demanded explanation from them of the ugly incident. The principal leaders of the CP confessed some of their guilt and apologised. But at the same time they refused to agree that the election should be deferred. Students then gathered again in front of the Principal's room and requested him to cancel the undemocratic election and arrange for a new one. But he refused to do so without the consent of the CP leaders. The CP then told the Principal that they would convey their final opinion before 12 noon, next day. In the meantime students began to collect signatures against the undemocratic election and

almost three-fourths of the students signed.

On the day around 12 noon, about 200 students gathered for a rally. The CP suddenly agreed to defer the election by one month. Both the CP boys and others began to place what they had to say before the gathering. One student narrated in detail the criminal activities of the CP and called on the students to stand unitedly against such attacks. The CP tried to stop him but failed. The boy's speech was punctuated with cries of "shame, shame" from the masses. Others also spoke in the same tone and all these speeches were applauded. The CP boys rose to speak and began to vilify individual students. Other students objected. One such allegation was proved to be a lie on the spot. Finding all their dishy attempts failing, the CP workers went into a rage and began to attack the students. Sound of slogans like "Long live students' unity" drowned slogans like "Chhatra Parishad Zindabad" raised by a handful of CP workers. At this point, two CP workers were seen running out from the crowd, shouting "Election will be held on the 25th. We won't tolerate all this any longer. We won't leave without a mass massacre".

The students then went to the Principal's room en masse and demanded protection. The police came. The CP anti-socials appeared. Students protested to the police. One police officer reassured them and then went into a friendly discussion with the hoodlums. Then the police informed the students that they were ready to assure security to all except Naxalites. Two police officers extorted a written declaration—"We are not connected with Naxalites" from two boys and openly asked one CP leader to keep a watch on the boys. Meanwhile at the Principal's instance the College Election Committee sat for a session. Students waited eagerly outside the room. They submitted a written complaint to the election committee describing

in detail all the humiliation at the hands of CP hooligans and proposing to present the boys who had particularly suffered from such attacks. But the committee did not find it necessary. After a session of three hours the committee decided, ignoring the opinion of at least three-fourths of the students, that the election would be held on the 25th. The CP workers were beside themselves with joy. Other students refused to accept this mockery of election and 90% of them did not come to college on the election day.

The Indian Bourgeoisie—III

IF we follow the characteristics of the Indian bourgeoisie and its relations with other classes, it will help explain some of the peculiar behaviour of the bourgeoisie. In dealing with other classes whose class interests are often contradictory to its own, the behaviour of the Indian bourgeoisie, being a bourgeoisie of a semi-colonial country and in an era when the class is more reactionary than revolutionary, is quite distinct in nature from the earlier bourgeoisie of the Western countries. Here we will try to indicate in short what these distinctions are.

Mao Tse-tung in his analysis of the character of the bourgeoisie of colonial and semi-colonial countries points out that, 'Being a bourgeoisie in a colonial and semi-colonial country and oppressed by imperialism, the Chinese national bourgeoisie retains a certain revolutionary quality at certain periods to a certain degree—even in the era of imperialism—in its opposition to the foreign imperialists and the domestic government of bureaucrats and warlords... and it may itself ally with the proletariat and the petty-bourgeoisie against such enemies as it is ready to oppose....'

"At the same time, however, being the bourgeois class in a colonial and

Result: 'Election' held for 24 seats—of these 4 seats were unrepresented because the CP could not find any candidate for them. The CP "won" 20 seats with one seat contested in the manner described at the beginning. Election for 9 seats held in abeyance.

Tailpiece:—A lesson for the students of dialectics—Even violence, if it is crude and big enough to bring about the desired qualitative change, has got some use in ushering in a paradise of non-violence.

semi-colonial country and so, being extremely flabby economically and politically, the Chinese national bourgeoisie also has another quality, namely, a proneness to conciliation with the enemies of revolution. Even when it takes part in the revolution, it is unwilling to break with imperialism completely."²⁹

The two-faced nature, as described here, is the clue in following the peculiar behaviour of the bourgeoisie of colonial and semi-colonial countries. Often they are termed nationalist or comprador on the basis of only one face.

The Indian bourgeoisie are no exception. During the colonial rule they participated in the nationalist struggles and compromised with the British rulers at some stage or other. But neither the struggles nor the compromises should be viewed in such isolation as to characterise them as nationalist or comprador. Both characterisations are one-sided.

Here are two extracts from a single issue of a mouthpiece of the bourgeoisie:³⁰

"India would prefer to go without industrial development rather than allow the creation of new East India Companies in the country, which would not only militate against her economic independence (but) would

also effectively prevent her from acquiring her political freedom."

"We must expect alliances, agreements and contracts between foreign industrialists and ours... There can be no objection, in principle, they become natural and necessary once we grant that our country should be industrialised and that the process cost much less if we could enlist foreign technical and financial co-operation for the purpose."

Is this dilemma peculiar to a nationalist or a comprador? A horse should be called a horse,—not an elephant or a donkey.

About the Chinese national bourgeoisie Mao had an interesting comment. "The national bourgeoisie is less feudal than the landlord class and not so comprador as the comprador class."³¹ The same comment applies to the Indian bourgeoisie too and may be extended to conclude that they are less nationalist than the nationalists, less imperialist than the imperialists and less fascist than the fascists. In fact, the best expression for their character is that they do not have any character. They are capitulationists.

It is the tendency to compromise with the enemy at some stage or other which blocked the development of fascism too. During the nationalist struggles, there arose strong nationalist leaders like Subhas Bose with fascist orientations (a strong nationalist spirit and dislike of proletarian ideology). Like fascists they got strong support from the middle class. But the ideology could not develop because the bourgeoisie, particularly the bigger section of it, did not come to its support. There is no reason why a leader like Subhas Bose, an unparalleled fighter of bourgeois revolution, would be disliked by the bourgeoisie, except that the capitulationist bourgeoisie of colonial India all along disliked strong nationalism. Their ideology of limited struggles and capitulations found its champion in Gandhi.

The same trend continued even after independence. The bourgeois-

sie never cut itself off from the imperialists. Foreign capital continued. The country remained a member of the British Commonwealth. Foreign policy became a shadow of the nationalist struggle of the bourgeoisie, avoiding any step that might cause irritation to the imperialists. Nevertheless, since the imperialists are giving more concessions to the bourgeoisie today, compared with the days under British colonial rule, capitulation has become more prominent. We have already shown how the big bourgeoisie has largely capitulated to the imperialists in the post-independence years and how the State practically carries out the intentions of the imperialists.

The question arises whether one-time nationalists may join the reactionary bloc or not. For a semi-colonial bourgeoisie it is possible, and this is why they are best called 'capitulationists'. The same bourgeoisie, which is revolutionary against a comparatively weak enemy, may join hands with the enemy if it is strong enough; or, if the enemy gives enough concessions to the national bourgeoisie they may betray the interest of the nation, and, finally, in the possibility of a revolution threatening their position the bourgeoisie may join the world reactionary bloc. In India, since the imperialists are giving more concessions to the Indian bourgeoisie, the class has joined hands with them. A fine parallel will be found in China after the Japanese invasion. The Japanese, to break the unity of the Chinese revolutionaries, promised to look after the interests of the Chinese industrialists. A section of the Chinese bourgeoisie headed by Wang Ching-wei immediately capitulated to the enemy.³² The irony is, this Wang Ching-wei was a good associate of Sun Yat-sen. The same history is being repeated in India.

However, a more detailed investigation is necessary into the nature of the individual bourgeoisie and their representatives. Among the big houses Sriram is known as more nationalist, 'Sir' Biren, a near-comprador, and

Tata lies in between. Further, there is a general tendency to look for the compradors only with the big bourgeoisie. One must not forget that within the smaller bourgeoisie there are many Sens like Sen-Raleigh, whose industrial base without the foreign partner is doubtful. But if, without a proper investigation, the class as a whole is declared comprador we shall bloc many a Sihanouk from joining the revolutionary front in future.

Rural Mass

Up till now we have only occasionally mentioned the great rural mass and the semi-feudal exploitation in Indian society. True, the industrial sector, where merely some 30 per cent of the national income originates, plays a major role in Indian society. But unless we follow their relations with the vast rural mass we shall be unable to indicate the roots of the major part of exploitation in Indian society. It should be remembered that while the bourgeoisie holds nothing more than a pivotal importance in Indian society the major task of revolution is one of ending rural exploitation.

Imperialism "first of all allies itself with the ruling classes of the previous social structure, with the feudal lords and with the trading and money-lending bourgeoisie, against the majority of the people. Everywhere imperialism attempts to preserve and perpetuate all those pre-capitalist forms of exploitation (especially in the villages) which serve as the basis for the existence of its reactionary allies."³³ In the Indian colony the British either created a semi-feudal reactionary base in rural areas, or preserved it wherever it was available. Throughout the nationalist movement this class acted as counter-revolutionaries. Naturally, there arose the proposal for abolition of these classes after the transfer of political power.

But it was not possible for two reasons. The ruling bourgeoisie is like the bourgeoisie of a semi-feudal and semi-colonial country. While most

of the landlords invest one part of their wealth in industries, investment in land for semi-feudal exploitation is quite general even with the big bourgeoisie.³⁴ This overlapping of interests has prevented the bourgeoisie from going against going the semi-feudal exploiters.

Secondly, with political independence, the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the semi-feudal exploiter class occupied a secondary place overnight and now this bourgeoisie in the country cannot strengthen the hands of the proletariat, with whom they are having the principal contradiction—by taking their help in abolishing the feudal remnants. "Capitalism can agree to enter into compromise with the reaction of feudalism in order to suppress the working class."³⁵ This is exactly what has happened in Indian society.

What share do the semi-feudal exploiters have in the state power?

Apart from the individual participation of people of this origin in bourgeois political parties, political organisations and in the army and the bureaucracy, there are other important channels. By their economic position the rural rich can easily associate themselves with the bureaucratic representatives of the government in the countryside. Thus, at least in the rural areas, they virtually influence the state machinery to serve their purpose against the people. After independence from colonial rule the network of rural administration has been extended through village panchayats, Community Development Projects, village co-operatives etc. The semi-feudal strata have almost monopolised these institutions, and, through these they directly link up with the state machinery and serve as the base for the bourgeois rulers.

Because of these, under the bourgeois rule, the problem of semi-feudal exploitation in India will never be solved and the rural poor will never be better off. The pulling down of landlord authority—a vital task for a change to occur in the countryside—is not possible unless

the bourgeois state power is smashed. Here lies the importance of directing the rural struggles against the ruling bourgeoisie.

Principal Contradiction

Summarising, we may say that the three big mountains—imperialism, remnants of feudalism and exploitation of the capitulationist bourgeoisie—act like dead weights on Indian society. It is the capitulationist bourgeoisie, the nationalist bourgeoisie of the semi-colonial country, which has captured power. On it both imperialism and feudal remnants rest. The ruling bourgeoisie is capitulating more and more to the imperialists, becoming increasingly comprador. Because of their relations, though the bourgeoisie is in power, the preponderance of semi-feudalism in agriculture and the increasing colonial penetration had enough scope to continue. These are the grounds for calling the country semi-feudal, semi-colonial.

At present the term 'society' is confused with 'economy' as if it is the economy itself. Since there is a huge semi-feudal remnant in the economy together with huge imperialist penetration it is hastily termed as a 'semi-colonial semi-feudal society'. Therefore, we should first of all try to indicate what the term actually means and to what extent it differs from the economy.

That social relations, ideas and institutions come out of production relations is the basic principle of Marxism. In an economic base several production relations may exist, and consequently several social relations, ideas and institutions of several classes. When considered together, these constitute the superstructure.

But in a class-based society the contradictions among the class lead to the domination of one class by another; and in such a society though the superstructure may contain ideas and institutions of several classes one essentially dominates over the others and creates a society of its own.

For such domination in the class-

based society the ruling classes have devised a fine institution, composed of different coercive instruments, called the State. In any country, the ruling classes exercise political power through the State, dominate over other classes and make a society of their own. Though the ideas and institutions of other classes may exist in such a society, the ruling classes necessarily try to suppress them with their institutions, particularly with the help of state power.

But since the superstructure includes the ideas and institutions of other classes it helps these classes to fight for their class interests. Thus, the ideas and institutions of the proletariat grow in a capitalist society, while colonial organizations grow in a semi-colonial country.

This is the fact which is often missed. Even though it is a society of the capitulationist bourgeoisie, the remnants and foreign economic intrusion in India have created their own ideas and institutions. One must not be misguided by the existence of these and declare the society to be a semi-colonial, semi-feudal one. One must not forget that such ideas and institutions, like those of the proletariat, may exist even in a capitalist society. Their development may one day overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie. But as long as the bourgeoisie exercises political power in India it should be properly called a capitalist society with capitulationist characteristics.

One may question whether a capitalist society may be described, at the same time, as a semi-colony too. It is fairly correct, since, the two relate to the two different concepts. One may easily check that Mao himself included the bourgeois state of Turkey after the Kemalist revolution in semi-colonial countries.³⁶ Even the Russian socialist society, just after the October Revolution was described as a semi-colonial country by him³⁷ in the discussion of principal contradictions in the semi-colonial countries. Since a country, whatever be its society, is a hinterland to the strong imperialist powers of the

world even if it is itself not a strong power, any weak country, whatever be its society, may be called a semi-colonial country correctly.

By describing India as a capitalist society no wrong judgment is made about the huge semi-feudal agriculture or the huge foreign penetration in the economy. An example will suffice. In Russia the bourgeois democratic revolution in February was followed by the socialist revolution in October. The economy had little scope to change in those few months, and the same economic condition of foreign imperialist penetration remained unaltered all through the transition; it was the same under the autocratic rule of the Tsar, in the capitalist society after the bourgeois revolution and immediately after the socialist revolution and the establishment of a socialist society thereby. No doubt, the economy influences the society; but we do not have an arithmetic scale to indicate that so much of economic control results in political control. It is, therefore, nonsense to go on measuring the control by different classes of the economy in order to characterise the society. It would not do to say that the society is a semi-feudal on the basis of the predominance of the semi-feudal agriculture in the economy. Who exercises political power is the determinant of the nature of the society.

Difficult to Fix

Since India is a semi-colonial country the principal contradiction here offers a complicated picture. The colonies and semi-colonies, apart from their respective rulers, attract the interest of the imperialists too, they take definite and active roles in the reaction. That is why the principal contradiction is difficult to fix.

Since the bourgeoisie is in rule the present task appears to be one of smashing its power. But in such a situation the imperialist powers will take up definite and active reactionary roles.

On the other hand, we have already stressed that the ruling bour-

geoisie is capitulating more and more to the imperialists. Under such circumstances the principal contradiction will definitely involve the imperialists, being one between the imperialists and the national people.

The present course of semi-colonial development and the increasing capitulation of the ruling bourgeoisie make this possible. But it depends on how the imperialists act. As indicated by Mao Tse-tung, when imperialism carries out its oppression by milder means, the ruling classes capitulate to imperialism.³⁸ But when it adopts stronger means like wars of aggression, various classes, including the national bourgeoisie, except some traitors, unite against imperialists. The recent Cambodian case is a good example. So long as the imperialists adopted milder means of oppression the nationalist bourgeoisie headed by Sihanouk capitulated to it. But as soon as the imperialists started waging a war of aggression the national bourgeoisie joined the anti-imperialist front. Similarly, in India, if the imperialists stick to the present milder course of oppression the bourgeoisie will not side with the people. But if the enemy tries some adventurist policy of aggression the anti-imperialist front will be stronger by the participation of the bourgeoisie, barring traitors.

But imperialism is not the only force to challenge the rule of the bourgeoisie in the future; the threat may come from the proletariat and peasantry. What will be the developments in such a situation?

About the general behaviour of the bourgeoisie, particularly about the national bourgeoisie of the colonial and semi-colonial countries, it is said that, "when confronted by a formidable enemy they unite with the workers and the peasants to oppose the enemy; but when workers and peasants are awakened, they turn to unite with the enemy to oppose the workers and peasants."³⁹

This indicates two distinct possibilities in the future:

If the imperialist penetration deepens in the future so as to threaten

bourgeois rule, the bourgeoisie will side with the people and the principal contradiction will be one between the imperialists and the national people.

But if the imperialists carry on milder means of oppression, as is being done at present, and the strength of the proletariat and peasantry develops to challenge the rule of the bourgeoisie, the bourgeois reactionaries will side openly with the imperialists. In such a case the task will be one of overthrowing the rule of the capitulationist bourgeoisie which is aided by the imperialists. Mao cited the case of Russia after the October revolution as one of this type. Today we have a still more glaring example—the case of Ceylon. Whatever be the nature of the insurgency there, seeing the bourgeois rule being threatened, all the imperialist powers came to help reaction.

The question is: To what extent will the imperialists help reaction in such a critical situation?

Today imperialism is on its deathbed, and so it has become much more desperate. Hence the possibility of revolution in a country today will not result in the strengthening of the domestic reactionaries by mere armed help, as it happened in Russia after the October revolution. Today the participation of the imperialists in such a civil war will be much higher.

Anti-imperialist

This is the situation in general. India has another aspect. She is the biggest semi-colonial country, the largest single debtor country of the World Bank and the most substantial trade partner of the USSR outside the communist bloc. A successful revolution in India will liberate more than one-fourth of the people of the world who are oppressed by imperialism and will change the balance of power, to a great extent, in favour of the anti-imperialist camp. It is, therefore, certain that the imperialists will do their utmost to resist the sources of the revolution in

India, whether the Indian capitulationists desire it or not. This leads us to conclude that, whatever be the initiation of the revolution in India, it will have to develop into an anti-imperialist struggle, into a principal contradiction between the imperialists and the national people.

It is difficult to indicate the probable course of the revolution. Since the imperialists are carrying on milder means of oppression and the bourgeoisie is capitulating more and more to the imperialists, the task is one of fighting the bourgeoisie. But as the revolutionary tide grows imperialist intervention will increase, finally resulting in a principal contradiction between the imperialists and the Indian nation.

Imperialism today "becomes panic-stricken by the mere rustle of leaves in the wind". Hence the severest resistance by it to the success of an Indian revolution will not be a dis-

tant phenomenon, whether the bourgeois capitulationists desire it so early or not.

Thus, at some stage or other, the principal contradiction, in the context of revolution in India, is sure to become one between imperialism and the nationalist people. It should be the task of the communists to make all the nationalist people aware of this fact and to bring all the anti-imperialist people to their side. It will be wrong to term the capitulationist bourgeoisie as comprador and thus forbidding many a Sihanouk from joining the revolutionary front. This will be a left sectarian policy. On the other hand, the capitulationist bourgeoisie should not be called nationalists, and the people should be made conscious that the task of national liberation cannot be achieved by collaborating with the capitulationist bourgeoisie as is claimed by the CPI and the CPI(M).

(Concluded)

²⁰ "On New Democracy", Section V.

³⁰ *Eastern Economist*, May 18, 1945, pp. 658 and 642 respectively.

³⁵ "On Tactics Against Japanese Imperialism", Section I.

³² "On New Democracy", Section VIII.

³³ "Outlines of The Revolutionary Movement In Colonies And Semi-colonies", Sixth Congress of the Communist International. Also quoted in "Chinese Revolution And The Chinese Communist Party", Section III.

³⁴ The recent land grab agitations brought out this fact clearly.

³⁵ "What The Friends Of The People Are And How They Fight The Social Democrats", Lenin, p. 161, 1966, Moscow edition.

³⁶ "On New Democracy", Section VII.

³⁷ "On Contradiction", Section IV.

³⁸ "On New Democracy", Section V, paragraph 5.

³⁹ "On Contradiction", Section IV.

(This paper has been prepared by a group of students and is published for discussion.)

Can Capitalism Develop In Indian Agriculture ?

RANJAN SENGUPTA

THE bumper harvest of foodgrains in recent years is causing as much alarm among the peasantry as it is being used as an occasion for mutual back-patting among the bureaucrats in Delhi. Shabash, Kishan! says the Minister. Save us from the quagmire of plenty! cries the farmer. With eight million tonnes of procurement, government warehouses are full to the brim. The Indo-Pak war and the assistance programme to Bangladesh have relieved the hiatus to some extent, for the time being. But only for the time being. Hopefully such relief will not present itself once again in the future. What will happen then?

And yet, more than two hundred million of our countrymen are starving. No hope for them even though the warehouses are straining at the seams with an overflow of foodgrains.

'Grow more food' is the order of the day. 'Encourage capitalism in Indian agriculture' is the strategy of the campaign, well designed to strengthen the rich peasantry and landlords. The so-called New Agricultural Strategy with its emphasis on fertilizer and labour-displacing equipment strongly favours the affluent peasantry at the expense of small farmers and agricultural labourers. The consequent sharp rise in the productivity of land is an undeniable fact. But the basic question still remains: Can capitalism continue to grow in Indian agriculture?

Chased by the income-tax office, crores of black money is fleeing into the countryside to redeem itself in the cowdung of agricultural capitalism. Hordes of gentlemen-farmers, that is, retired civil servants, army officers, lawyers, businessmen, doctors and the like, are descending on vil-

lages to herald the great transformation. Nonetheless, we ask: Can capitalism in Indian agriculture sustain its growth this way so as to sweep away the relics of feudalism, develop the productive forces, and proletarianize the rural masses?

According to the official scheme, capitalism is intended to reach and spread in Indian agriculture riding on the crest of the New Agricultural Strategy. But, at the moment the new strategy cannot be applied beyond one-fifth of the cultivated land that has assured water supply through irrigation or otherwise. All the same, the Fourth Plan (1969-1974) counts on this strategy for as much as two-thirds of its target of additional food output. A further expansion of such areas is very much on the agenda.

India now imports a bulk of the required fertilizers and agricultural

implements. Table 1 shows that fertilizers and capital expenses on machinery and equipment claim respectively 38 per cent and 29 per cent of the total cost per acre of wheat under the new strategy. These two items thus add up to 67 per cent. One can then say that the imported inputs for the new strategy constitute roughly one half of the total cost.

If so, let us see what it means. For every Rs 100 spent in order to produce wheat, for instance, under the New Agricultural Strategy about Rs 50 goes out of the country in payment for the corresponding imports. Hence only Rs 50 is left within the country to buy the wheat, thus produced, that costs Rs 100 in the first place. Obviously in that case there would be a big gap between the available purchasing power and the cost of output.

TABLE 1

COSTS PER ACRE OF WHEAT UNDER THE NEW AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY

A. Current Expenses :

	(Rs.)	(Per cent)
1. Human labour	54.54	10.69
2. Bullock labour	56.08	11.00
3. Seeds	14.22	2.79
4. Insecticides	10.00	1.96
5. Irrigation	30.00	5.90
6. Fertilizer	195.00	38.24

B. Capital Expenses :

1. Interest on capital, depreciation and other charges on machinery & equipment	150.00	29.42
Total	509.84	100.00

Source: Ranjit Sau, "Resource Allocation in Indian Agriculture", *Economic and Political Weekly*, (25 September 1971, p. A-115.

This gap could be filled only if a demand for wheat to the extent of Rs. 50 comes forth from the non-agricultural section.¹ Otherwise

there would be a glut of wheat in the market with all the symptoms of over-production, no matter how many millions of human beings are perishing without food in the limbo of utter poverty. The market simply does not recognize these destitutes.

Precisely this is what is happening in India today. Warehouses are straining at the seams with an overflow of foodgrains; the farmers are worried at the 'over-production' of wheat. But, side by side, the teeming multitude of rural and urban poor are going hungry. And the outflow of payments for imports continues. The New Agricultural Strategy has thus run aground in the shallow marshland of purchasing power.

To let agricultural capitalism keep at the same place, industry has to run fast. To let it grow further, industry has to run even faster. The reason is two-fold. First, expansion of industry would enlarge the home market for agricultural goods. Secondly, opportunities for employment in industry would help proletarianize the rural masses; otherwise in the face of the onslaught of capitalist farmers, the weaker peasants would simply take shelter in obstinate, tiny family-based farms as they are doing now. Can Indian industry fulfil these two tasks?

The answer is in the negative.

Jobs for a Handful

Taking advantage of its technological backwardness and limitation of investible funds, foreign capital and technology are penetrating every sphere of Indian industry. This technology, fostered as it is in a labour-scarce advanced economy, is labour-displacing in nature, and hence by and large inconsistent with the factor endowments of the labour-surplus economy of India. Foreign technology creates jobs for a handful of high-paid skilled workers, and fails to absorb the unskilled rural labourers on a large scale. On top of it, the lion's share of the surplus value is shipped out of the country. The net result of all this is that even though industrial

production may rise, it does not sufficiently expand the home market for foodgrains, nor does it open up adequate scope for employment of rural labourers who are unable to find a place in agriculture.²

Of course, in the near future India is likely to be self-sufficient in the production of fertilizers, tractors and other agricultural equipment. In that case Rs. 50 of every Rs. 100 spent in food production will not directly go out of the country in the form of payments for imports, as it is doing now. Will it then resolve the riddle of a narrow home market for agricultural capitalism in India? Not necessarily.

So long as Indian industry under the pressure of foreign capital, that is the vehicle of foreign technology, fails to absorb the surplus labour displaced from agriculture, and so long as Indian agriculture under the policy of the so-called New Strategy continues to rely on the capital-intensive, labour-displacing technology, agricultural capitalism in India is in the long run doomed to founder on the rock of a limited home market.

However, it would be incorrect to underestimate the impetus and the new lease of life that may be derived by Indian industry for a while in the early phase from the increased availability of foodgrains. This in turn may even support the growth of agricultural capitalism, albeit temporarily. But it would be far-fetched to expect that the process would eventually go on to the extent of transforming Indian agriculture completely into capitalism. For hard-pressed in the face of fierce competition from capitalist farms and rejected by industry, millions of poor peasants would take refuge in the security of family-based, although impoverished, farms.³

It is, of course, likely that because of the nature of the market, part of the land under foodgrains would be diverted to cash crops like oilseeds, cotton, jute etc. Such a trend was already discernible during the last two decades. The proportion of the cropped area under foodgrains dec-

lined steadily from 76.7 per cent in 1950-51 to 73.5 per cent in 1966-67, and correspondingly cash crops gained.⁴ But in view of soil conditions and other technical reasons, such a diversion may not go very far. Furthermore, on the demand side it should be remembered that the industrial technology imported from abroad is well known for its declining dependence on agricultural raw material.

If the prospects of agricultural capitalism in India are thus dubious, does it mean that stagnation is the final destiny of Indian agriculture and the continuous decay in poverty the inexorable fate of the rural masses? Certainly not.

There is only one possible way out of this impasse which we have already indicated elsewhere,⁵ but presumably it bears repetition. Out of some 350 million acres of cultivated land, about 300 million acres raise only one crop per year that takes, say, six months at the outside. That is to say, 300 million acres of land remains idle for fifty per cent of the time per year.

Approximately 15 acres of land is adequate for ensuring a reasonable level of income (Rs 1200 per year) for a family. There are 9 million landless agricultural labour households in India. So they would require 135 million acres for achieving this level of income.

Note that the top five per cent of rural households own 40 per cent of the total land, i.e., 140 million acres, which presumably produces a single crop per year and lies fallow for the remaining six months. Landless labourers should organize themselves into labour brigades and cultivate this otherwise unutilized land for themselves. Not the maximization of commercial profit but the maximization of production for all of them should be the guiding criterion.

Apart from the immediate economic gains, the army of landless labourers meanwhile would get a drill in organization, discipline and militancy in the very process of cultivating the otherwise idle land for themselves.

Sooner or later the small peasants also would join them. And that would certainly weld the shield of a formidable political force.

Notes

1. For the analytical foundation of this proposition see V.I. Lenin, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, in his *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, pp. 51-58.
2. M. Kidron, *Foreign Investments in India* (1965); Reserve Bank of India, *Foreign Collaboration in Indian Industry* (1968); and National Council of Applied Economic Research, *Foreign Technology and Investment* (1971).
3. Ranjan Sengupta, "Conditions of Agricultural Growth", *Frontier* (14 August 1971), specially pp. 13-14. and Ranjit Sau, "Agricultural Revolution by Production Function," *Economic and Political Weekly* (26 June 1971), specially pp. A-54/A-58.
4. Government of India, *Indian Agriculture in Brief* (1970), 10th ed., pp. 28-29.
5. Ranjan Sengupta, "An Aspect of An Agrarian Programme", *Frontier* (6 November, 1971).

Ethos Of An Emblem

A. VASUDEVAN

THE biggest bank in the public sector—and of the country—serving the smallest man, of course, has adopted a new emblem. On the first day of last October, as the bank's central office stepped ceremonially into its new administrative building, a sleek skyscraper on Bombay's Backbay Reclamation, promising to set the pace in no time for deposit mobilisation, priority sector lending as well as interior decoration, (were it not licked so soon by fire,) the imperial and age-worn banyan tree on its covers, letter heads, and pass-books gave place to a blue disc with a small circle in its centre.

The emblem of an institution, says the blurb announcing the change, be it of a priestly order or a soccer team, has a profound influence on all those who are privileged to bear its badge. A seductive symbol, it goes on, often holds the key to the success of a product in capturing the fancy of the wayward consumer. For, to give some shape to an idea is innate in men and a symbol serves to meet that inner urge. The change in the bank's symbol, therefore, is not just another case of an old order changing, yielding place to new. It signifies a metamorphosis deep within.

The new symbol is circular, it is explained, because the circle is the 'simplest and the most symmetrical of geometrical shapes'. Besides, roundness has been associated with 'unity, completeness, the fulness of man's being and his growing consciousness.' The circular shape is also intended to suggest 'continual expansion like a ring in the water, to cover the entire country'. And the small circle in the centre connotes that 'despite its size, it is the small man that holds the centre of the bank stage'. To leave something to the imagination perhaps, no clue is offered to the meaning of the colour of the emblem—elegant blue.

To mark the notable event the bank has brought out for its patrons pamphlets in noble prose, and dainty gift items bearing the new symbol on their heads. For its own men, tie tacks and cuff links embossed with the new emblem have been put on sale for Rs 14 a set—a paltry price for one on bank pay—and everyone has been urged to display his or her (we presume suitable pendants or ear-rings are also available) dedication to the ethos of the emblem by wearing it on their chest and sleeves. To drive its message home, the cover page of the October 1971 issue of the bank's 'House Journal' is studded with images of the emblem and inside, carries a special appeal by the Chairman of the bank to his men to live up to its lofty, ideals.

Consider now the following scenario: the office of the bank in a sleepy semi-urban centre in the interior of a district in north-east India, housed the ground floor of a two-storeyed building—the tallest structure of the locality. The agent's chamber, a medium-sized rectangular room furnished with a large, glass-topped, steel table and a few wooden chairs, an iron safe and a wall clock. The table is clean except for an advertisement to tell visitors that 'travellers' cheques are encashed here', and a tray on one side containing the day's 'dak'. Late afternoon of a particularly dull mid-December day. The agent at his desk, a greying man with over twenty years in the bank as a 'sub', in well-tailored tery-wool, initialling the day's receipts in a leisurely way, looking at times across the door in front leading into the nearly empty bank hall, and yawning occasionally. The first of three letters, applications for loans, all from farmers are quickly disposed of as they are of villages located beyond the critical limit set by the bank for its operations. The next lot is a bunch of circulars from Head Office, the lengthiest one detailing the bank's latest strategy for reversing the dip in its farm advances. Financing the

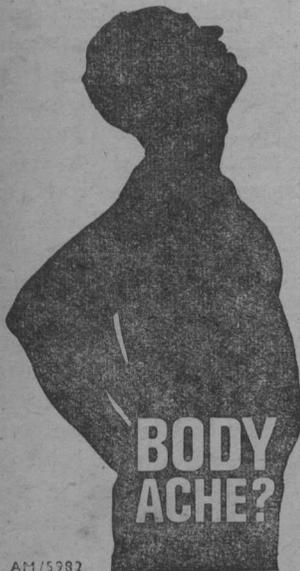
farmers now on, the circular says, will be the exclusive responsibility of branches to be set up and earmarked for the job. Thanking God, the Agent turns the next and the last item of the dak, the latest issue of the 'House Journal', his only link with the other members of the big family to which he is proud to belong. After a quick glance at the Chairman's message on the cover page, he starts looking intently into the contents.

The first item is a sketch by an old-timer reminiscing on his training days in the bank when probationers had to learn things the hard way (poor writer must be an odd man on his way out!). Then comes the 'college newsletter', from the bank's training college, highlighting the events of the past months—a week-long 'special programme for management development' attended by some of the bank's top officers, a 4-day 'motivation laboratory' arranged to emphasise the significance of achievement motivation and a visit by a member of the U.S. Operations Mission to Thailand. The letter presents the reader with a photograph of the distinguished visitor seated with his hosts during an inter-session break, relaxing (knees crossed

at the correct angle). Next, a red rose in full bloom and then a profusely illustrated 3-page write-up on the 'Red-letter day in the history of Indian Cricket'—how fast the hearts beat in this country that evening etc. The pages are quickly turned over.

Newsletters again, four of them, from Colombo, Frankfurt, London and New York. The Colombo letter begins on the reassuring note, that 'with the virtual termination of the terrorist activities, the Government has now regained firm control throughout the island' and that 'as if to make up for the lost time sporting activities have recommenced with full vigour'. The letter from Frankfurt reports, despite dull time generally with most Germans out holidaying, a gala Indian evening at a leading club interspersed with sitar recital and Bharatnatyam and climaxed by a fashion show with mannequins in hot pants among other dresses, all made of Indian stuff of course. In the London letter the pride of place goes naturally to Oval, though Wimbledon and globe-girdling Indian scooterists too get some attention.

Most titillating however, is the account of the 'melting pot', New York in summer, that is—mostly hot, mostly outdoorsy and mostly good



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humour—and, in particular, of Chase Manhattan in noon-time, adorned by a reincarnation of Isadora Duncan in pink tunics and bare legs loping gracefully around a sapling on the Plaza to the tune of Beethoven's music. Thoughtfully, the window of the bank's office itself in New York affords a grand view of these ravishing charms.

The rest of the journal contains little to detain the reader. A brief description of the new administrative building with an indication of its dimensions fills a page. An idea of the interior is promised in the next issue (let us hope the foreign expert who despite his Pondicherry preoccupations so kindly lent his hand to decorate it exquisitely will still be available to undo the damage wrought by the recent blaze). News in pictures cover the next two pages showing among others distinguished depositors at a branch in a fashionable locality of Bombay (maestros of all-India fame) and a motorcade carrying the Indian cricket captain. Then follows news from branches—two pages for branches numbering nearly three thousand—insipid material with a line or two thrown in on deposit mobilisation results and success of a loan granted to a graduate farmer. The emblem and its meaning pop up again on the back of the cover.

The clock strikes five. A bus rumbles by raising a pall of dust. A gust of icy wind fills the room with the dust and also smoke from logs burning in the adjoining shacks. The agent folds up the journal. A bearer waiting impatiently outside rushes in and removes the tray from the table. The forlorn agent prepares to withdraw to his flat upstairs and face the dark night with visions of Ajit Wadekar, hot pants and shapely legs alternating in succession, vaguely wondering how he fits into this scheme of things.

When does the small man figure in the milieu? Why, in that engaging centre of the symbol? And how does the bank get the psyche of the Oval-Wimbledon-Manhattan syndrome tur-

ned on the small man? That surely can be taken care of by the practitioners of the management art and their motive lab.

Escapist Fare

By A FILM CRITIC

THE recent festival of Czech films in Calcutta, held under the aegis of the Central government in terms of the cultural exchange agreement between the two countries, failed to impress the audience which has come to expect the highest standards of film-making from the Czech directors whose earlier works lent a special distinction to that country's pictures in the sixties. The variety of genres and style expressed with a certain candour provided an authenticity rarely to be found in other countries. And that too was attained in a brief period of a couple of years, made possible by the combined efforts of young graduates of the State Film School and veterans. Judging by the current crop one can hardly escape the conclusion that what one has vaguely heard about the post-1968 period is by and large true. That the official wrath of the present regime has been directed against the more talented and creative, leading to the emigration of some, is well known. What is distressing is that those who have held on to their country can hardly afford to persist in their spirit of defiance. A conformist code is generally followed and the result is films of an escapist sort, looking away from the immediate realities of existence.

The two science fiction films, *I Killed Einstein*, *Gentlemen* and *On the Comet*, the latter by the celebrated Karel Zeman, are full of technical virtuosity. The former concerns an attempt to travel back by a time machine to the early years of the century to kill Einstein before he could work out his theories. The sets are excellent and the sombre

situations are not unrelieved by funny episodes. But repetitive gimmicks lessen the impact and the overloaded message at the end seems a distraction. Zeman's piece is certainly not one of his more inventive SF films; his earlier ones seen in this country were more imaginatively executed.

Tricks of Deceptive Love, a two-in-one film based on two stories, one of which is by Boccaccio, are bawdy amorous adventures in Latin style, with pleasing colour, excellent period decor and a tongue-in-the-cheek treatment. *Men About Town*, another comedy, is about three masons who come from the country to Prague and who intend to have a little pleasure in course of their stay. There are some hilarious moments and the characters, particularly the three men, act extremely well but the rather pedestrian theme hardly sustains the comic aspects beyond a certain point.

The Key relates to the period of heroic resistance in 1942 at the time of the assassination of Heydrich who was ruling Bohemia on behalf of the Nazis. It is brilliantly constructed, with the principal protagonist recreating his past life through flashbacks which gradually establish not only his personal life but the whole resistance movement. The gruesome torture chambers recollect the horror of the days. At times however, particularly when the question of the resistance fighters based in London is being discussed and a meeting with them takes place, the complex character of it all gets a little simplified. The real post-1968 phenomenon is the reference to Lenin and showing of his study in the Kremlin and the rather bland commentary on the importance of Soviet help during resistance which saved the day for the Czechs.

Karel Kachyna whose earlier *Carriage to Vienna* and *Funnyman* were appreciated by the audience here, once again demonstrated his dexterity as a director in *Jumping Over Puddles Again*. Based on a real life story by an Australian au-

thor, Alan Marshal, it is a remarkable account of a small boy who gets crippled at an early age but whose assertion for life leads him to enviable heights. The performance of the small boy (Dlouchy) is extraordinary and one marvels at Kachyna's handling of him through situations involv-

ing great physical pain. The natural beauty of the lush locale, the straddling on horses in the emerald green field and the small boy's massive effort to ride his horse to jump the puddles excellently merge to make it a memorable film, certainly the best in the present series.

on April 29, 1917 on the question of Finland's secession at the Seventh All-Russia Social Democratic Labour Party Convention, he said: "Our viewpoint on the question whether the nationally repressed states of Russia should remain with us or secede to form their own nations, is clear. The choice lies with the peoples of the states themselves... We are witnessing a contradictory posture on the part of the Finnish Provisional Government. The representatives of the Finns, that is the social-democrats of Finland, have stated that prior to Finland's secession from Russia, the Finnish Government must give back the Finnish people their social, civil and human rights. The Finnish Government is unwilling to accept the sovereignty of the Finnish people. With which side, now, shall we take our stand? Obviously, on the side of the Finnish people, for we believe that no nation can be kept perpetually under domination by force".

Stalin's stand on the Finnish question was similarly applicable in the case of the struggle waged by the people of Bangladesh for independence and sovereignty. By separating the question of national independence from that of class struggle, the Communists of East Bengal could not provide effective leadership and organize the working class people of Bangladesh.

In a situation where the people of a repressed nation put up armed national resistance to secure national freedom, it is possible—though unusual—that the leadership of such a resistance movement could come from the national bourgeoisie. But this is by no means a justification for the Communists to dissociate themselves from the movement, although some "ultra-revolutionaries" might have considered such association as being reactionary on the fact that such a movement is in actuality limited only insofar as the question of national independence is concerned.

That the active and whole-hearted participation of the peasants and workers in this liberation struggle is

Documents

Bangladesh : Call For M-L Unity

The newly-formed Bangladesh Communist Unity Consolidation Centre at a press conference in Dacca addressed by Messrs Nazrul Islam, Badrudin Umar and Amal Sen issued a statement. The following is the summary:

The most tragic part of the Communist participation in the Bangladesh liberation movement was the lamentable failure of the Marxist-Leninists of Bangladesh to work upon their understanding of the nature of the recent struggle to liberate their motherland from the clutches of Pakistan.

Even since 1947, the Pakistani rulers had unleashed a reign of exploitation over East Bengal and since the exploitative machinery was based in West Pakistan, the feudalistic, capitalistic and imperialistic exploitation assumed the extreme form of national repression. The stranglehold was perpetuated and it became more and more pronounced with the passage of time. The first Bengalee opposition to the heinous designs of the Pakistani rulers came in the form of the language movement in 1952. For the first time in their history, the Bengalees of East Bengal—irrespective of their class consciousness or their ideological affiliations—strove to find their true identity, their national cohesion. This cohesion or the feeling of being a separate nation became more ostensible as the Pakistani repression on East Bengal became more apparent and vicious. Communalism and the

policy of two-nation theory of Muhammad Ali Jinnah was deliberately spun out to perpetually deprive the Bengalees of their cultural and political rights. At the same time, while the frenzy of this twisted bigotry was being whipped up to serve the interests of the Pakistani overlords, economic exploitation of East Bengal was progressively reducing the people to virtual beggary.

The East Bengalee national bourgeoisie—who were also victimized by the Pakistani big capital, perhaps not to the extent as the toiling masses of this country—formed their special alliance and joined in our national movement to be free from Pakistan's repressive control. But the Communist Party of East Bengal was unable to grasp the fact that developing and strengthening armed resistance against national repression was also an indispensable part of the class struggle to which the Communists were irrevocably committed. The Communists failed to provide the necessary organisation and leadership to the workers and peasants because they were unable to connect armed struggle against national repression with class struggle.

The Marxist-Leninists of East Bengal were misguided in their unbecoming debate over whether or not the secession of Bangladesh would be conducive to socio-economic liberation. This question, from the strict Marxist-Leninist viewpoint, should not at all have posed an issue. In this context, Stalin had clearly stated the correct stand. Speaking

ideologically correct, can be easily understood from the clear enunciation made by Stalin that in any case of national resistance, the working class should join the movement even if its leadership may come temporarily from the national bourgeoisie.

This bourgeois leadership of a national resistance movement comes only when there is an absence of a Marxist-Leninist organized leadership resulting from a disorganized Communist Party. The participation of the working class has also sprung from the ruthless exploitation of the working class people of Bangladesh by the military dictatorships of Ayub and Yahya as also by the regimes preceding them.

Bangladesh has now become a free and sovereign, but not socio-economically liberated nation. People from all classes of society participated in this freedom movement because, in essence, it was indeed a truly national movement. Of course, different classes of people viewed the movement from different angles, but the crux of the matter is that they fought unitedly and bravely against the common enemy.

But now the most important question is to carry the struggle, which brought about our national freedom, to its logical end, that is bringing about a total, absolute and complete revolution in our political, social and socio-psychological patterns of living, culminating in the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The interests of the working class

Mr SUBHAS BOSE,

Our agent at Alipurduar

Newtown Library,

Alipurduar P.O.,

Dist. Jalpaiguri,

West Bengal.

MARCH 18, 1972

would not be served without the formation of a monolithic, organized and cohesive Communist Party which believes in Marxism-Leninism. During the freedom struggle the comrades-in-arms, inspired by Marxism-Leninism, had fought undauntedly against Yahya's occupation forces. Perhaps, a section of the Marxist-Leninists could not grasp the basic underpinnings of the popular aspirations and had thereby failed to lay due emphasis on them. Few others might also have mistrusted the way in which the liberation movement was being led and organized, and quite a few had perhaps taken a hypocritical stand and removed their presence from the battlefield to somewhere safer. Some others, due to party obligations, are possibly at a loss as to what would be their next step. All these people—as true patriots and genuinely committed to Marxism-Leninism, to the working class and to the general masses—must now take stock of the situation and unite to form a monolithic Marxist-Leninist Communist Party on the basis of correct and ideological principles and guidelines. They should remember that their ultimate aim is to truly establish the independence and sovereignty of Bangladesh and this can be possible only when the workers, peasants and the broad masses of Bangladesh would be able to achieve their genuine political, economic, social and cultural rights. For this purpose, the over-riding need is to form a correct and monolithic Communist Party comprising all the other Marxist-Leninist parties, factions and divisions through the process of self-criticism and friendly mutual criticism. But caution must be exercised in order to accept only those who are really committed to the basic Marxist-Leninist philosophy, possess the basic political orientation and are conscious about their fundamental stand regarding the international communist movement. Without adhering to these pre-conditions, the formation of a monolithic Marxist-Leninist Communist Party is not possible.

Letters

Indo-US Rapport

Mr R. P. Mullick in his article 'Indo-U.S. Rapport: Two Faces' (*Frontier*, January 26) tried to prove that India and the USA have been following a policy of friendship and collaborationist rapport behind the subtle showing of differences. While he marshals relevant material and statistics to substantiate his contention, he quite understandably ignores inconvenient material. Since the American understanding of India was mainly influenced by the English who usually entertained a 'romantic view' of the Muslims, obviously to serve their purpose, American policy towards India right from the very beginnings of her independent statehood has been based on mistrust and lack of confidence. The 'Calvinistic Vigour' with which America was trying to contain Soviet influence and communism in Asia made her seek India's support and cooperation in this task. When India decided not to be a camp follower, refusing in the process to join any military alliance, her action was characterised as 'immoral'. Pakistan came in handy and was prepared to bear the onerous responsibility of combating communism in Asia. The American distrust of India persists, in fact it has stiffened with the passage of time, particularly after Nixon's diplomatic postures in regard to the Bangladesh issue.

Mr Mullick tries to prove that India has received more economic and military assistance than Pakistan after the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962. About this, Chester Bowles, writing in the July issue of *Foreign Affairs*, 1971, said that it was not even half of what had been received by Pakistan. "The emergency shipments of \$70,000,000 worth of military equipment that we airlifted to India was the first step in modernisation of India's defence forces. The Indian request for \$500,000,000 of military assistance to be spent over a period of five years was less than what had been given to Pakistan." Even this

modest request was not complied with, obviously not to antagonise Pakistan. Mr Mullick seems to have forgotten that even Kennedy did not keep the promise of \$60-million assistance he had resolved to provide India at his meeting with Macmillan at Nassau. Though the decision to modify the suspension of arms to both countries was taken in 1967, (suspension of arms supply followed the Indo-Pak conflict of 1965) it was Pakistan again who largely benefited from it because of her predominantly American-arms-equipped military machine. It should be noted here that India's twenty army divisions and navy have been mainly equipped by Soviet Russia. It is therefore a distortion of facts to say that America has not calculatedly tilted her balance of patronage in favour of Pakistan.

As for economic assistance it is indeed true that it is more than what has gone to Pakistan. But if considered from the point of India's population, the aid per capita is higher for Pakistan than what it is in India. India would have got much higher aid if she had given the green signal to America to invest her surplus capital in the private sector of our economy. Even though three steel plants have been established in the public sector with the assistance, technical and economic, of Britain, West Germany and Soviet Russia, a U.S.-financed plant has not materialised, though Galbraith did try his utmost. The massive economic aid totalling about four billion dollars that India received up to the end of September, 1970, was given not so much to strengthen the basis of her economic structure in accordance

with the policy of gradually socialising the means of production as to tie her entire economy to the apron strings of the dollar. In view of the Indian attempt to achieve self-sufficiency, it is quite likely that American interest will show substantial decline. The trend of U.S. aid shows this. In 1966-67 credits from the USA amounted to \$390 million; in 1970-71 to \$190 million. Even if the suspended aid is resumed, the quantum of aid will be less than what it was in the preceding year because of India's decision to stop PL-480 imports of foodgrains from 1972.

Pakistan received nearly 1.5 billion dollars worth of arms from America for which she had to pay very little or nothing at all.

PHANI BHUSAN GHOSH
Ashoknagar

Calcutta Intellectuals

Calcutta, once the nerve centre of progressive thought and ideas, seems to have lost that tradition. Intellectuals are now self-centred, greedy and opportunistic. They are bought and their conscience appears to have been half-soled. The spectre of discrimination, the socio-economic agony of this State and the onslaught on the intellectual life of Bengal move neither their heads nor their hearts. The ivory-tower intellectuals kept quiet when the eminent journalist intellectual, Saroj Dutta, was murdered by drunken police gangsters within a few yards of Raj Bhavan. The burning alive of the Durgapur headmaster inside his office, the murder of a Belur professor inside the classroom, the terrorization of school and college teachers by the Al-Badar of the ruling party go unnoticed. Teachers are helpless spectators of fake Saigon-type college union elections or tearing of university answer-scripts in front of medical college principals by the politically conscious (?) students and hired hoodlums of the Chhatra Parishad.

The assault on Ashima Poddar and Gita Chatterjee by the Congressite

anti-socials did not stir even a ripple among women intellectuals. Promising young boys are being done to death like rabid dogs in the streets everyday by the police. Rape, loot, murder have become the rule of the day in this State. But intellectuals are unstirred and unmoved.

Charity begins at home. Before posing as saviours of other's intellectual liberty, one must understand what is happening in one's home in the name of law and order.

SISIR K. MAJUMDAR
Calcutta

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A new view of their own life begins to form, and the frontiers of knowledge widen. When true education begins, superstition breaks down.

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