

frontier

Vol. 5: No. 36

DECEMBER 16, 1972

PRICE: 40 PAISE

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PRINTED AT MODERN INDIA PRESS,
7, RAJA SUBODH MULICK SQUARE,
CALCUTTA-13 AND PUBLISHED WEEKLY
FOR GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS (P) LTD.
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DECEMBER 16

ONE full year has gone by since Bangladesh was "liberated". Today Dacca is spending lavishly to commemorate December 16. The Bengali Muslim middle class, that was born with the partition of India in 1947, has consolidated its position with its rebirth on December 16, 1971. It never had things so good; so much so that every Awami Leaguer and every bureaucrat, who form the core of this class, is suspected to be corrupt and a sucker, unless otherwise proved. The President of the State, who was a few days ago in India, spoke highly of his country and had the highest honours conferred on him by two famous universities. The Prime Minister of the State, characteristically, said recently that he was concerned to hear that villagers could not sleep well because of hordes of dacoits roving around. "Let the villagers sleep peacefully," he said, very worried.

It is doubtful however if the villagers will sleep well even if arms liberally distributed during the civil war are taken back. Dacoits of another sort, more civilised in garb, are out to plunder. Prices have shot up, beyond the imagination of the Bangladesh people. Things are scarce, consumer goods imported from across the border are no good for use and yet dear to buy. On June 7, 1972 the Prime Minister had given fifteen days time and warned that the blackmarketeers were playing with fire. Twelve multiples of the ultimatum period have gone by without any sign that the fire has touched even the finger-tips of the blackmarketeers. Every tall promise that this leader of the nation made has met the same fate. He could not even, during one year, find time to nullify the black act, the 1961 University Ordinance, which took away from the universities every freedom to act although the proposed nullification appeared to be comparatively innocuous. This whole year Sheikh Mujib has fulminated, off and on, over the non-recognition of Bangladesh by Pakistan and has spent his energy on the proposed trial of war prisoners. That is the time-honoured strategy of all bourgeois leadership to deflect the attention of the people from the reality to illusion. To use a phrase so very popular in the bordering State, high thinking and plain living.

Unfortunately for the country, there is no party, organisationally strong, to call the bluff. The common impression is, as March 1973, the month of the general election draws nearer, that the Awami League will win.

The Awami League has not made itself brighter with its record, but neither has the opposition, which is split with its various ideologies and interests. Maulana Bhasani loves to distinguish the two Bengals of this sub-continent by calling one Muslim Bangladesh and the other Hindu Bangladesh—which is a good enough indication of the way the mind of the Maulana moves. Mr Toaha has his own way—altogether different from this parliamentary struggle. The other splinter parties stand more by phraseology than action. The Bangladesh Communist Party (Leninist), Bangla Shramik Federation, Bangladesh Krishak Samity,

Bangladesh Biplabi Chhatra Union—all spend their energies in voicing protest against the establishment. It is doubtful if the proposed Central Action Committee of the opposition political parties will be able, even if formed, to counteract the fascist methods of the Awami League now unleashed, as shown in the attacks on Maulana Bhasani and Mr Ataur Rahman Khan. Bangladesh is destined to experience in the foreseeable future the frustrations of petty bourgeois leaders who restrict themselves to criticising the government but fail to take the masses in confidence and organize them into an instrument of revolution.

against the army repression; some missionaries have appealed to the church in Lisbon to denounce the killing of people. But this is not expected of the Church which lives at the mercy of the Lisbon Government. In fact two Portuguese clergymen are now in jail because of their criticism of the war. But the majority of the missionaries ignore the repression by saying that this is confined to certain combat zones. They are actually helping Lisbon to legitimise the war.

Janata Boards?

At last Indian banking's honours list has been published. Like the rolls of names released every year by Rashtrapati Bhavan, the list now prepared by North Block also defies any easy or commonsense explanation. While the ideal of "janata" banks remains as distant as ever, New Delhi apparently has not seen anything wrong in going ahead with setting up "janata" boards for the nationalised units. People from varied walks of life, presumably all of them unquestioningly "committed", have been herded together to give a fresh orientation to Indian banking and to fulfil the expectations aroused by nationalisation. Representation has been given to workmen and officers of each bank and to depositors, farmers, workers and artisans. The number of directors on each board varies between 9 and 11 and a few more may be added before long. But what causes misgiving is not the size of the boards but their composition. They are neither homogeneous nor workmanlike, and it is most probable that most decisions will be based not on consensus but on timid acquiescence in the government line propagated by the official members. The stranglehold of big businessmen over banks as in yesteryears has now been replaced by that of bureaucrats. If this is a stride towards socialisation of banking it is not known, but that it is not a

Everyday A My-Lai

American bestiality reached a new high in the massacre of My-Lai; since then there have been many My-Lais. The world knows the kind of war the Americans are fighting in Vietnam and other countries of Indochina, thanks to the correspondents posted in the region. True, the war the Portuguese are carrying on against the nationalists of Mozambique cannot be compared with the Vietnam war either in respect of the scale of operation or the extent of destruction, but what is important to note here is that for the Africans in Mozambique everyday could be a My-Lai. Unfortunately the world Press is yet to turn its attention to this area; we get little information about what is happening in Mozambique. Photos showing the white soldiers in front of the chopped heads of Africans have not yet passed into the hands of newspapers but they are kept as souvenirs by the Portuguese participants in military operations. The horrid experience of the Reverend Da Costa, a Portuguese missionary, has, however, appeared in some Western papers. He has kept a list which shows that during the one-year period May 1971 to May 1972, no less than

110 persons—men, women, children and old people—were killed in the district of Tête in course of reprisal action. The district belongs to a region whose total population is nearly ten thousand. It is reported that members of the Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO) came to this region to stop the construction of the Caborra-Bassa barrage, but without success.

Every Portuguese action is not in the form of reprisal; on November 4 last year, 16 persons, among whom were nine children, were burnt alive in a village of Mucumbura. This and many others were planned ahead and executed coolly. It has also been seen that in a reprisal action, the innocent people suffer most. Da Costa has cited a number of villages like Traquino and Chacolo—which were burnt down after the forcible evacuation of people. Such people are then taken to 'strategic hamlets' which, according to official version, are set up to protect them from "enemy attack". People who are used to a different kind of living find it impossible to adjust themselves to 'strategic hamlets'. Some in desperation try to flee but in almost all cases they are gunned down.

It is not that nobody had protested

stride towards efficiency is obvious.

Indeed, after New Delhi had taken the plunge with the nationalisation it should not have been surprising if it chose to bring banking strictly under official control. But the temptation to present a facade of deliberative democracy by broadbasing the boards, which can at best be a debating forum and at worst a rubber stamp, has got the better of it. Even the redoubtable Reserve Bank, which not so long ago was the most autonomous and powerful central bank in the whole of the developing world, has now been made to kowtow to the bosses of the Finance Ministry. Thus while banking autonomy is being steadily eroded at the top at the policy-making level, New Delhi is trying to create the impression that it is being strengthened at the base. But whom it is actually trying to fool by this half-measure? It is no longer a secret that most of the hard-headed bankers have been lukewarm about underwriting the government's rather well-intentioned move to widen the orbit of banks' clientele by putting a little more emphasis on trust and a little less on security. But how can this objective be served when quite a few boards continue to be headed by people who cannot outgrow their long-cherished conservatism? And how deeply committed indeed are those committed officials who have during the past several months been put in charge of some of the nationalised banks?

Trade With Tokyo

On the Indian economic scene the Japanese are latecomers. But in spite of the late start, Indo-Japanese economic relations have grown considerably in recent times. As a mark of this growing material bond, the businessmen and the bureaucrats of the two countries met in New Delhi last week to find out how best to utilise their respective opulence and poverty for mutual benefit as also to sort out their areas of agree-

ment and disagreement in this joint enterprise. If the participants' speeches and the messages are any indication, the Japanese are keen on further prospecting this sub-continent as a dumping ground for the bulging yen. And the Indians, as a reciprocating gesture, have indicated that they are not indifferent to the Japanese inhibitions regarding the bureaucratic interference in private capital in India. At least there will be no take-over, the Indians have said. Besides, there is the prospect of combining the sophisticated Japanese capital and the intermediate Indian technology for some fat pickings in third countries.

Verbal warmth apart, there is very little in the Indo-Japanese economic relation that would justify any talk about egalitarianism in their commerce or about India's bid for self-development without outside help. For, despite all the latest bravado, India has remained basically a supplier of primary commodities to Japan. Indian exports to Japan have fallen by Rs 21.1 crores this year; but her imports have soared by 100 per cent during the same period. Moreover, though Japan is India's fourth biggest trade partner, the latter's share in Japan's overseas trade is less than two per cent. With the recent changes in the Asian political scene

New Delhi's chances of regaining its past position have also receded. For Peking is sure to make a dent in its share of the Japanese market.

Till now Tokyo has supplied private capital to India at a cost higher than that from its Western allies. It is only recently that it has been talking about credit liberalisation. The change in the Japanese attitude is the direct result of the crisis of their accumulating surplus and the revaluation of the yen that it caused. After this experience Tokyo awakened to the peril of overmuch dependence on Western crutches and turned its face towards Asia. It has shown its eagerness to reduce the cost of borrowing and reschedule the tariffs for brisker trade. But if the record of the Japanese capital in South-East Asia is any guide to its future functioning in this country, there is little to gladden India even if the Japanese come in a big way to her aid. Though Japanese businessmen have expressed their appreciation of New Delhi's latest sentiment regarding aid, Tokyo's motivation cannot be different from that of the Western donors. New Delhi, however, has little to choose. For, with the American aid bottled up and the Russians unable to meet the resources need, it had to woo the Japanese to fill the bowl.

The Spirit Of Moga In Delhi

SUGAT SINGH

THE University of Delhi is in turmoil. Since November 14 about 100 students have been injured in police beatings, including 25 girl students. About 150 students are behind the bars. Four students have been rusticated. What led to all these events?

The College of Engineering at Kashmiri Gate, Delhi, is affiliated to the University of Delhi. It is run by the Delhi Administration. The teachers of the college have been on the path of struggle for the last three

and a half months (demanding the take-over of the college by the University. In this way, they feel, their status and grades will be at par with those of Delhi University teachers. (Incidentally another college i.e. College of Arts, has been struggling for the same for the last 15 months). Instead of solving the problem, the Government demoted 14 and suspended 13 teachers of the college. The teachers went on a chalk-down strike and thus teaching in the college has remained suspended for

a long time. The teachers' strike was supported wholeheartedly by the entire university community, i.e. students, teachers and karmacharis. But the dilatory tactics of the Central Government and the Delhi Administration could not arouse the leadership of the Delhi University Teachers Association (DUTA) till November 13, when they belatedly tried to help the teachers of that college by simply holding a General Body meeting there. The students on the other hand were getting restless. Obviously they were worried about their studies. They held a demonstration at the Old Secretariat, the office of the Delhi Administration, on November 14. The police beat a large number of students. The students went to the University to appeal to the Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor to take over the college. Instead of having been received properly, they were threatened. This angered the whole student community and the next day a larger number demonstrated before the Vice-Chancellor's office. This gave rise to an untoward situation affecting also his office. The Vice-Chancellor, Dr Sarup Singh, closed the University for three days and suspended four students including the President and the Joint Secretary of the Delhi University Students Union (DUSU). He appointed an Enquiry Committee of three professors, which, as was known beforehand, recommended the rustication of those four students. The Vice-Chancellor did so (17-11-72) and as a precautionary measure closed the University indefinitely.

The students are now being accused of violence. But is it not violence on the part of the Government to sit tight on the demands of the teachers and students for such a long time? When they demonstrated peacefully before the Old Secretariat, they were beaten mercilessly. Like the Brahmin priests of the past, who held that Vedic ceremonial killing was no killing (Vaidiki himsa himsa na bhavati), the Government, it seems, holds that Sarkari himsa himsa

na bhavati, i.e. violence caused by the Government is no violence. On the other hand, what the students did was only to resist the violence let loose by the police.

The students' agitation and the police atrocities in Delhi should be viewed in the background of the students' agitation in Moga and other places. The pattern of handling the situation happens to be strikingly similar—resort to such brutality and repression that the whole movement is crushed for decades to come.

The role of the Central Government in the whole affair is more than clear. It has successfully divided the University community. The Delhi University Karmachari Association under the leadership of the CPI and the DUTA under the leadership of the CPM are not supporting the cause of the students. Instead they are raising a hue and cry over the alleged vandalism by a section of the students. They are harping on this point so much that they are unable to see the real enemy. They have raised the ghost of the Jana Sangh as the root cause of vandalism. Hence it is the target of their attack. The students, on the other hand, are fighting for their democratic demands. One of these happens to be participation of students in the University administration. In this context it should be noted that the authorities use a very subtle method to keep the students engaged in incidental rather than the main issues. For instance, the demand for withdrawal of the rustication order and release of arrested students will keep the students engaged for at least another six months. Meanwhile, nobody will be there to fight for the main issues i.e. democratisation of the University set-up, student participation in all administrative bodies and takeover of all colleges by the University.

The present crisis in the University has caused some interesting developments as well. For instance, a move has been started by some activists of the revisionist parties to give the slogan of left unity against Jana

Sangh vandalism. A meeting was convened on December 2 on the University campus, where the DUTA President (who happens to be a member of the local unit of the CPM) expressed his helplessness in the matter of students' agitation and said that for the sake of his own survival as President, he has to move cautiously. He was silent over the demand for withdrawal of the rustication order. He and his like insisted that the Jana Sangh was the main obstacle in the path of the democratic movement. The communist revolutionaries present there demanded that the main enemy be clearly defined, which according to them, happened to be the Congress Government and its agents. This was not acceptable to the revisionists. The revolutionaries had already made their position clear on this point by issuing a handbill entitled "What is to be done?" They very clearly said, "If a handful of irresponsible students belonging to the Vidyarthi Parishad indulged in the alleged acts of vandalism instead of promoting and strengthening a democratic movement, it only goes to show that the Vidyarthi Parishad (an organ of the Jana Sangh) is not interested in democratic action. However, this should not be allowed to obscure the just and democratic nature of the demands that gave rise to this movement...." Their insistence was on forging unity among the students, teachers and karmacharis for the realisation of their democratic demands. For the time being they demanded immediate withdrawal of the police, unconditional release of arrested students and an impartial enquiry into the police brutalities. For the restoration of normality, according to them, withdrawal of the rustication order was the prerequisite. The revisionists were silent on these points. Instead they went on insisting that the fascist Jana Sangh be curbed in order to allow a real democratic movement to grow. They were told pointblank that the Congress was more fascist than the Jana Sangh and that it was

because of their inactivity that the Jana Sangh could parade as the spokesmen of democratic forces in Delhi and Delhi University.

Distortion

The vulgarization of Marxism can be seen in the University of Delhi where the members of the CPI and the CPM are seen with the University authorities during all democratic struggles of students, teachers, and karmacharis. Here one more point merits mention. The DUTA President distorts facts (*Social Scientist*, October, 1972) with regard to the College Council agitation in August/September, when he describes the communist revolutionaries in the University to be "those who think that teachers' movement should not have anything to do with economic demands". On the other hand, it is a well-known fact that they had been always in the forefront in all agitations of students, teachers and karmacharis, which began and ended with economic demands. They, however, do not approve of economism to which the CPI and CPM units in Delhi University have completely succumbed. They fully participate in all trade union activities in the University. In this respect, even the Charu Mazumdarists in the University have been forced by circumstances to join the trade union movements.

Postscript

An altogether new chapter opened with the reopening of the University on December 4 after a closure of 18 days. The police were withdrawn from the campus and posted at a distance. The students held a massive rally where they gave an ultimatum to the University authorities to either withdraw the rustication order or face the take-over of the University by the students after 48 hours. On Wednesday, December 6 the students appointed their own Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and other officials at a rally held before the Vice-chancellor's office. It was all peaceful. When the students

alter their symbolical take-over of the University were about to disperse, a stone was thrown by the police posted inside the Vice-Chancellor's office and a window was broken. This served as an excuse for them to pounce upon the students like hounds. Tear-gas shells were fired and the students were chased. They were beaten mercilessly. Many of them were bleeding profusely. The fact is amply borne out by the reports published in even the bourny geois press. Even teachers were not spared. Eye-witnesses have described how the police resorted to violence without the least provocation. Every one cried, "Beware! MOGA is here!!"

Kerala

'Bhoodan' CPI Brand

RAMJI

KERALA is in the grip of a 'revolutionary' version of Vinobaji's vintage Bhoodan Movement. This, known as the One Lakh Houses Scheme, thought up and jet-propelled by the CPI leader and Minister, Mr. M. N. Govindan Nair, is getting support, in typical style, from all sections of vested interests, the Lions Club, the Rotary Club, the various communal organisations, the big business-wallahs, and other revolutionary elements who are straining at the leash to provide houses for the homeless poor, the homeless peasant particularly.

The fuel for this master scheme is no less than Rs 20 crores and this is to be obtained from the public through voluntary contributions. Behind this facade of 'contribution', a massive and comprehensive scheme of extortion is going on in every nook and corner of Kerala. Yet another fanciful assumption is that it would be possible to put up a house at a cost of Rs 2,000, the estimate for each one of the One Lakh Houses Scheme. The enthusiasm

with which the CPI men, and to a certain extent the Indira Congressmen, are going about this instant socialism programme, founded on thinly veiled extortions, is highly reminiscent of the Bhoodan movement when it took shape first. The press and the respectable leaders of public opinion are incoherent in their praise of this old, Vinoba-prescription in a new bottle.

The model houses to be put up under government auspices for Rs 2,000 each would put any kennel to shame. It is unlikely that this will benefit any prospective householder. Of course, it would be a boon to the contractor, mostly CPI men, and this seems to be the only result of the Scheme. The general public, accustomed to instant revolutions like the "green revolution" etc are viewing the antic and ballyhoo with resigned indifference. They feel that this 'housing revolution' would also die down when another new slogan is coined by the CPI or other ruling parties. So far, it is learnt, about Rs 20 lakhs has been collected for this scheme which is a year old. The target of 19 crores and 80 lakhs to be collected for the one lakh houses is still very far away.

But, apart from that, certain sections are having a very merry time: the CPI men and the army of officials deputed to do the work. Under the scheme, absolutely useless land in villages, which would not fetch even Rs 10 per cent, have suddenly started fetching Rs 250 to Rs 300 per cent. The trick is to get at the local CPI leader, grease his palm and he and the revenue officials together would buy useless land at exorbitant prices and the landholder and others in the deal and the CPI elements would be very happy. A lion's share of the funds for the scheme is thus diverted into the pockets of the party men. The Congress caught on to this trick only late in the day. But they too are trying their best to make up for lost time and lost graft.

Extortionate, stick-them-up methods are being employed by Govern-

ment officials in fleecing money from all sections of the people, rich and poor alike, students included. The One Lakh Houses epidemic has made life difficult to the average citizen. At every turn he is confronted by self-important groups, official and non-official, and practically forced to part with cash. The sales tax and profit tax officials are working overtime collecting this unofficial tax. Groups of students go about terrorising householders and the collections they make are invariably spent in cinema houses, tea or arrack shops. This Scheme has now become a convenient and respectable label for anti-social elements to indulge in their activities without let or hindrance. The victims are the people: the middle class and the poor, particularly.

Congress Elections

The first organisational elections in the Indira Congress, after the split, are going on now in Kerala. There is tremendous struggle for positions at various levels and no

holds are being barred in behind-the-scenes tactics to secure prize posts. The Youth Congress and the students' wing are ranged on one side against the older elements who are disgusted with the heroics of the younger elements which they feel have landed the party into considerable trouble. Actual physical assaults have taken place among rivals in various mandals and the elections at these centres have been suspended. All attempts at dignity and decency have been jettisoned and it is an open, free-for-all electioneering in which no tactic is too base if the end is attainable. The weeding of the membership also has been carefully done: all 'dangerous' elements, those with very sincere views and spirit of selfless service, have been denied active membership. The final results will be out by the middle of the month. From indications available, it can be forecast that the present leadership will continue: the elections have been properly rigged to achieve this end.

Our Man In Assam

HIREN GOHAIN

IT is difficult to resist the temptation to play the armchair politician. But I had better confess that the turns and twists of the language politics took me by surprise as much as anybody else. It is a damned complicated situation, with several major forces and interested parties at work, and with notable personalities changing their roles with breath-taking rapidity. (Though I still stick to my earlier assertion that the movement has been engineered and led by the Assamese bourgeoisie, and that it is a basically reactionary movement.) To dispel certain uncomfortable illusions I must brazenly reveal that I had neither saved lives nor prevented the mildest riot. It is because of the support of my friends belonging to the CPI(M), the silent sympathy of

decent Assamese people, and the courage of a few young men who would have no truck with rotting bourgeois ideals, that it was possible for me to play here a modest role. While the press censored or suppressed our views, at least one struggling English daily here gave us space unstintingly for our fight with entrenched reaction.

There was grim faction-fighting among the student leadership—each faction having its elderly advisers in the background—before they agreed to meet the Chief Minister for a dramatic parley midway between Shillong and Gauhati. Thousands of people thronged every day the grounds in front of the courts and government offices, including children and elderly women. In the countryside at least

not everyone understood clearly 'the cause'. The press had blared inspiration and condemned treachery until everyone felt that some demon had come to snatch our language away from us. Elderly people were sometimes given the impression that unless they joined the demonstrations they would be forced to speak Bengali at home. The CRP thought it a grand opportunity to display their characteristic brand of heroism. Native police officers were on the verge of panic. It was high time for Mr Sarat Sinha to climb down from his earlier inflexible position. He agreed to withdraw the earlier resolution in the very next session of the Assembly, and apparently assured the students that the resolution of the Academic Council of Gauhati University will be upheld. That caused disquiet and grave concern among the minorities.

The movement is not 'over'. Incidents continue to sputter in different places like random gun-fire. It is difficult to find out whether they have been staged by someone in the movement, by desperate elements among the minorities, or by the authorities themselves. The split in Assam Congress ranks, and the evident lack of support for the Sinha Ministry among the bureaucracy, can no longer be denied. It is said that when Mrs Gandhi came recently to this State, three shadow-cabinets were getting ready to take over with her blessings, and smirking in anticipation from behind the curtains! But Mrs Gandhi's confidence saved Mr Sinha this time. His cabinet however betrayed pathetic innocence and lack of initiative in the crisis, with one or two exceptions. The caste-Hindus are said to be particularly bitter about the fact that the Sinha Ministry has carefully excluded caste-Hindus from its fold, and caste-Hindus formed the backbone of the traditional middle-class elite. What is more to the point is that the Ministry has no very bright ideas about the future of the State, lacks political maturity, and is waging a losing fight against the entrenched bureau-

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crazy. There is no reason to think that this cabinet is more radical than the former ministries. But one thing that Mr Sinha has done has made him the most hated man among the middle-class elite, in spite of his strong "nationalist" leanings.

Since 1947 the Assamese middle class expanded numerically and advanced economically through the patronage of the State Government. It has now acquired a more or less crystallized character. Systematic patronage by MLAs and Ministers has helped to siphon the greater part of government funds into private hands. Contractors, high officials, professors and 'progressive' cultural workers have shared in the loot. Needless to say, the minorities, backward castes, and neglected regions smacked their lips at a distance. It is essential for the well-being of this middle-class elite to retain the control of the government, and they hope to do so through mustering the majority of the MLAs on their side. For instance an Assamese small businessman, with capital below Rs. 100,000, cannot dream of selling furniture outside the State. The home market is very narrow, with most people desperately busy trying to float just above the level of starvation. In these circumstances, the Government is his best customer, and he would stake everything to retain some sort of control over this Government. But this time, rather unpleasantly, New Delhi intervened to choose the local leader. There were apparently strict orders to check corruption and waste. Presumably corruption has now been eliminated from New Delhi, and Shillong must do the same. Mr Sinha tried to follow the directive quite obediently, and immediately got besieged by an hornet's nest of criticism and hostility. With the sources of the loot drying up the Assamese middle class discovered in Mr Sinha its sworn enemy. Mr Sinha has now two alternatives: either to fall back on the support of a rival class, say the poor and middle peasants, or to drive a wedge between the varied groups

composing the middle class along communal and caste lines in as quick a time as he can manage. Since the former alternative is ineffective without a revolution crushing the rich peasants, moneylenders and landlords (something that the bourgeois-landlord alliance in the all-India Congress won't permit any way), the latter and easier solution is most likely to be opted for. But the emerging middle class from backward castes and neglected communities hardly has the resources to fight the entrenched caste-Hindu leadership, which controls the press and every other important institution. Mrs Gandhi's strategy for North-Eastern India seems to aim at creating a mosaic of small social and political units perpetually bickering among themselves and perpetually appealing to Go-mata to resolve their differences. Communal tension among the Assamese themselves will be a god-send to her, though the Assamese leadership have only themselves to thank for this.

Grasp of 'Tactics'

The Assamese chauvinists are so short-sighted that they cannot suspect the designs of Big Capital. All they can think of is how to maintain their hold on the government by manufacturing a majority of Assamese voters and legislators. They are aided and abetted in their illusions by Marwari businessmen who have recently displayed a most touching affection for Assamese language and culture. But it must be conceded that they have shown a good grasp of tactics and a flair for planning. All sorts of methods are being used to keep up the mood and spirit of agitation till harvest is over and rich peasants and their dependents are braced for another battle. Press reports, statements, patriotic music on the radio, periodical processions, dramatically staged confrontations and incidents prevent the public from taking stock of the movement in a sober frame of mind. One egregious editor, not particularly known for brightness of mind,

focused a dazzling shaft of light on your hapless correspondent, presumably to lead patriotic thugs and hoodlums towards a kill.

During the peak of the movement fifty odd cars were racing daily between different points in the State, carrying news, directives and plans from the headquarters of the movement. Petrol pumps supplied petrol liberally. Each big town established secret telephone links with that headquarters. On the other hand the insignificant opposition found its telephones suddenly going dead, or emitting strange noises, or being cut off in the middle of conversations. Important local families saw to it that their children were in the centre of the patriotic melée. The student leadership at Gauhati did try to prevent an outbreak of violence. But a mass movement launched on chauvinist and communal premises is bound to lead to violence against other communities.

The minorities themselves sometimes acted with unwarranted rashness. The acute economic difficulties of the Bengali settlers, plus the loss of hope for any improvement in their position, certainly have bred in their midst desperate elements. Unrealistic slogans like 'greater Bengal' or memories of Subhas Bose do have some appeal for this fringe element. But the great majority of the Bengalis surely had sense enough not to muster strong behind them. Unfortunately, the Assamese made no such distinction. Any stray act of provocation was repaid soon in massive retaliation. Arson, murder, loot, rape all figured in the lurid tableau. And by some sort of defence-mechanism most of the educated Assamese managed to insulate themselves against the shock of such terrible fact. If you remonstrated with them, they would hotly dispute the details, refer to Bengali treachery of flatly refuse to believe that such things had happened. Callousness has also grown with the righteous identification of Bengalis with evil-doers. In the interior a few Bengali settlements that had become nearly

assimilated to Assamese society were razed to the ground by furious mobs. The other minorities have also been incensed by the Assamese zeal to assimilate them, and there are reports of incidents where the tribals have thrashed some Assamese traders in order to drive home their opposition.

Assamese intellectuals talk rather glibly of assimilation. But we have seen how that concept veils the desire to dominate other minorities. There is ground for thinking that the Assamese themselves are threatened as capitalism spreads its tentacles, and both landlords and businessmen find themselves doomed to an unequal fight against an incomparably powerful competitor. Since 1840 administrative measures have several times trampled upon the sentiment of the local population by tampering with the boundaries of Assam, and in the 1940s there was real danger of its inclusion in Pakistan. All this cannot justify the attitude of the Assamese towards other groups. The Assamese bourgeois are after all following in the footsteps of their enemy, Big Capital, in their arrogance and unfeeling brusqueness in treatment of the minorities.

To be sure, in the distant future different groups and cultures of this region are bound to come closer. It is also possible that with Assamese leadership showing a spirit of accommodation and liberalism several small groups would not mind merging into Assamese society in the long run. Provided, of course, that they are economically and culturally treated as equal. In the interest of solidarity itself, the Assamese should provide the minorities with every opportunity to cultivate and develop their languages and cultures. But to thrust on the minorities at this stage a culture and language itself in the need of strenuous effort at development is both unfair and stupid. This in fact was the judgment of the great radical intellectual of Assam, Jyoti Prasad, who has now been taken over by reactionary intellectuals, and whose remarks, torn shamelessly out

of context, provide them with missiles against the minorities. Jyoti Prasad, active during and after the Second World War, realised that peasant uprisings in Assam were but the offshoots of a worldwide movement of mankind for a better society. He said that in independent India Bengali or Gujrati or Hindi was as such a 'mother-tongue' of his as Assamese. He warned the Assamese against any attempt to deprive the minorities of their cultural heritage through a misguided zeal to assimilate. He even called the anticipated new culture of the future Eastern India 'a fresh East-Indian synthesis', deliberately refraining from using the term 'Assamese', though no doubt the latter would play the major role in this synthesis. But the intellectuals in Assam go on quoting him (as well as Lenin!) to support their plans.

Of course it is quite possible to force a 'solution' on the minorities by sheer strength of majority sentiments. But the majority itself consists of heterogeneous groups, and the alliance is bound to be as short-lived as any other alliance. The growing economic difficulties and the unequal sharing of economic benefits will soon widen the rift in the alliance. Further, students who will have received their university education in Assamese will find that jobs are as scarce as ever, that they will have no entry even to Meghalaya and Arunachal. If chauvinism is not exploded by that time—which is rather unlikely—we shall most certainly witness yet another series of feuds against outsiders for jobs, and internecine violence among former allies. Only, they will be bloodier and nastier.

Fascist and semi-fascist tendencies are becoming quite conspicuous in our social and political life, evidently with the blessings of Big Capital. At the moment the plea is that it is not prudent to allow the mischievous Bengalis to act and speak freely. It is a self-evident truth that Bengalis are liars, and why should we pollute our ears with their lies? That unwritten law also extends to those deluded souls who equate Bengalis

with Assamese or try to speak in favour of the Bengalis. The media are more or less united on this principle. Secondly, there is the constant apprehension that one would have one's head bashed by gangs of youths if one expressed dissent. The justification again is that subtle and malignant intellectuals always manage to find arguments and reasons in favour of their mischievous ideas. So honest and pure youths must get together and gag those spreaders of vile and irritating ideas. Thirdly, the majority is getting used to 'ultimatum politics' against the minorities: That is what *we* want and that is that. Fourthly, among the Bengalis there are two extreme positions in the Brahmaputra valley. One section has accepted the desperate solution of overnight assimilation, to the point of changing their surnames into Assamese ones. The other section, definitely smaller, wants to engage in direct combat. An example has been recently reported from Dibrugarh by a friend who is not biased against the Bengalis. According to him a casual group of schoolboys were suddenly set upon by a crowd of screaming Bengali women and chastised severely. Both the communities are still so hysterical in some places that such incidents do take place. Both Bengali chauvinism and Assamese chauvinism are blind alleys. But if both the groups fail to realise this, fascist leaderships will be catapulted into power and prominence.

What next? Well, the more it changes the more it all remains the same...

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Mode Of Production In The USSR—I

ARUN MAJUMDAR

STUDIES of Soviet planning so far undertaken tend to give the impression that the prime requisites for a socialist mode of production are public ownership of the means of production and substitution of capitalist market mechanism by comprehensive planning. That such an impression is grossly inadequate has been evident from the fact that in the Soviet Union neither public ownership of the means of production nor the introduction of planning could prevent the economy running into difficulties associated with price policy, production performance and major disproportionalities between sectors.

These difficulties were there throughout the last fifty years of the Soviet Union and it was these difficulties which prepared the ideological premise of the now-famous 1965 economic reforms.

We do not assume that a socialist mode of production can remain free from all difficulties. In fact the Soviet Union could not avoid the transitional difficulties of a young socialist republic. But the nature of the difficulties as they were in the Soviet Union was more akin to those prevalent in the capitalist world. Prices of production in the capitalist world are the cumulative result of intersectoral economic flows governed by the basic law of capitalism, i.e. the law of surplus value. Hence it is the set of contradictions generated by the operation of this law which reflects itself immediately in the price-level—its cyclical behaviour. In the Soviet Union, although such a cyclical behaviour did not exist—in fact could not exist, in an atmosphere of pre-determined prices—nevertheless the irrationality of prices vis-à-vis the growth of value streams did demonstrate itself in unforeseen profit and loss among various enterprises and a steady deterioration of production performance. In the Soviet type of

economy, the incongruity between prices and values is bound to be reflected in disproportions beyond planned anticipations. The Soviet Union throughout the 'fifties encountered such disproportions between agriculture and industry or consumer goods and capital goods or precisely between targets and achievements. Business cycles result fundamentally in terms of Marxian analysis, not from the operation of market mechanism as such, but from the operation of the law of surplus value.

This law creates the network of contradictions—contradiction between self-expansion of capital and the falling tendency in the general rate of profit, or decline in the rate of profit and rise in the mass of profit, or fall in prices of production and the underconsumptionist riddle, etc. In other words, no inner contradiction within capitalism originates from market mechanism although the latter only speeds up the process of these contradictions. To put it differently, if the law of surplus value operates under the capitalism and in a planned way, an economy cannot escape the cyclical onslaughts resulting from the set of contradictions the system would generate. What one can say is that because of planning and predetermined prices, cycles express themselves not on the money market but at the base, i.e., the base determining the value proportions on the economy's production map.

The blame for the entire difficulties in the Soviet economy is put on the centralised system of management, bureaucracy and Stalin. It was true that the Soviet system of centralised management would not establish a desirable rapport between a productive unit and the regional or national management. It was also true that bureaucracy as a phenomenon engulfed the entire economic life of the republic. Stalin was certainly to blame because his

leadership could not find out the source of evils. But all these seem to be valid only on the surface if one examines a bit closely the inner working of the Soviet production base since 1917 and delineates the pattern of its evolution till the present day. Such examinations are indeed necessary to justify or otherwise the present economic reforms taking place in the Soviet Union and to understand the present requirements of the Soviet ideology in the international communist movement.

This paper cannot undertake such a voluminous study within its permitted space. But in course of these examinations, certain pertinent questions—questions which were never raised by the Western Sovietologists or the socialist economists of any variety—assume importance. Those questions can be formulated as follows:

(1) What is the fundamental law of the socialist mode of production in contrast to the fundamental law governing the capitalist mode of production?

(2) Did the Soviet economy ever transgress its self-imposed barrier of state capitalism of the initial period? If it did, when and in what form did the economy realize the initiation and enrichment of the socialist mode of production and socialist production relations?

(3) In what way do the post-reform price policy and management policy represent a departure from capitalist practices in the West and can be treated as a unique discovery in socialist relations of production?

Fundamental Economic Laws

The basic economic law characterizing the uniqueness of the capitalist mode of production is the law of surplus value. Stalin in his last publication, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R.*, pointed out that neither the laws of markets, nor the laws of anarchy of production did represent the fundamental law of capitalism. He was of the opinion that the law of surplus value is the basic law, because the other laws are

available even under a particular stage of feudalism and the laws of markets do operate at an initial phase of socialism. The law of surplus value in Marxian analysis does operate under capitalism with the help of three variables—constant capital, variable capital and surplus value. While these variables together constitute the total value of a commodity, their rôles in dynamizing the value process or precipitating contradictions of the system are not similar. As we know, variable capital and surplus value help the expansion process, and both constitute the sum total of values created by living labour. But the constant capital entering into the total value of a commodity and the surplus value metamorphosed into constant capital brings about the perpetual relative shrinkage of the variable capital in the expansion process, and precisely this tendency precipitates the contradictions under capitalism. In other words, the constant capital can never exhaust itself, in fact it enters and re-enters along the time-path of a growth process under capitalism. If X is the surplus value, the total value, say, W shall be equal to $X+Y+Z$. But under expansion, when this Z will be reinvested as a constituent of the advanced capital of the second period in the following form

$(X+X_z) + (Y+Y_z) + \text{surplus value of the second period} = W_z$ we find that in the total value W_z of the second period the value of the constant capital in the form of X of the first period as well as the X_z of the second year's addition re-enters. This explains why the capitalist expansion process in its course increases the share of constant capital in the total advanced capital (i.e., constant capital plus variable one).

It is to be noted that living labour replaces not only the variable capital used up in the productive process but also produces the surplus value entering into the commodity. But the constant capital used up cannot account for any value to be created on its own, although it—in value form, i.e., as the value quantum ap-

propriating in itself the past surplus values—reappears in the total value of the current commodity. Such behaviour of the constant capital is the peculiar attribute of the law of surplus exchange value under capitalism. While the behaviour of surplus value helps tomorrow's value creation by itself being metamorphosed into the constant capital of the next period, the direct behaviour of constant capital is merely value appropriation. This double-faced behaviour of constant capital—as a productive means of living labour and as an appropriator of surplus value by appearing and reappearing in the scheme of expanded reproduction—can be explained in terms of the fact that capitalists are interested in the exchange value of commodities, labour power or living labour or constant capital, not in the use value of the same. But the dialectics of the capitalist system of production generates the use-values of all these phenomena. For example, living labour's productive activity creates use values, while the purpose of such activity in the creation of exchange values or the constant capital serves as use value when it operates as means of living labour, but serves as exchange value when it enters into the total value of a commodity.

From the study of the fundamental economic law of capitalism one can derive the ingredients of the fundamental law of the socialist mode of production. Regrettably, the hitherto published socialist economic thinking—as I have already stated—did not pay adequate attention to this aspect and indulged instead in explaining capitalism as the synthetic sum total of private ownership of the means of production, and laws of anarchy of production (these are certainly not derivatives from Karl Marx's *Das Capital*) and socialism as their opposite. For example, Maurice Dobb's model for industrialization in agricultural countries or his theory of investment planning and economic growth made the law of anarchy the main disease of capitalism and prescribed planning (e.g., planning of

inter-departmental proportions—proportions between Marx's Dept I and Dept II—or broadly, proportionality relations to be achieved in planned price relations) as the cure for all capitalist evils. The same is true of Lange's works.

It was indeed Stalin who for the first time pointed out in his last work³ that "the essential features and requirements of the basic economic law of socialism might be formulated roughly in this way: "the securing of the maximum satisfaction of the constantly rising material and cultural requirements of the whole of society through the continuous expansion and perfection of socialist production on the basis of higher techniques." Very correctly he further pointed out that neither the law of commodity production, nor "the law of the balanced, proportionate development of the national economy is the basic economic law of socialism" although both of them may play a historical rôle under specific time and space in accelerating production in a socialist economy. There is another instance to prove how a specific stage under socialist construction not in conformity with the basic economic law to be achieved may be necessary under a certain situation. This is the stage of state capitalism initiated by Lenin during the 'twenties when political power of the State was in the hands of the proletarian masses.

Again all we have said above conclusively leads to the other theoretical position that private ownership of the means of production—whatever importance it may have in the dialectical interpretation of the evolutionary history of various economic formations, e.g., feudalism, capitalism and socialism—does not constitute the unique essence of either feudalism, although socialism in contrast to all previous economic formations under the governance of private property must necessarily contain predominant social ownership of the means of production. This is stated, however, only to stress the fact that in no economic formation the basic econo-

mic laws have a pattern of ownership of the means of production as the nucleus around which they operate.⁴

If neither the law of balanced proportionate development nor the law of social ownership of the means of production constitutes the basic economic law of the socialist mode of production, then can we say that Stalin's formulation of the basic economic law of socialism is correct? Indeed, Stalin's formation was "rough", as he himself had admitted. It is rough because it is vague.

Marx once indicated that although capitalists are interested in enormous growth of exchange values, the real measure of an economy's wellbeing is the standard and accumulation of its use values. While the purpose of the capitalist reproduction is the expansion of exchange values the very process of realization of the law of surplus exchange value under the capitalist mode of production generates within its womb the law of surplus use value, i.e., the law which determines the essence of the socialist mode of production. The set of contradictions which a capitalist mode of production generates is essentially due to the operation of these two laws—the ruling law of surplus exchange value and the emerging and accentuating law of surplus use value. This law of surplus use value confronts capitalist production relations as a fetter to its growth although it originates from the productive forces unleashed by the operation of the capitalist law of surplus exchange value. This law of use value contains characteristics opposed to the law of exchange value. While the exchange value of an article is determined by the socially necessary labour, necessary for its production, the use-value is determined by an article's ability to satisfy a particular want. An increase in the quantity of use values may correspond to a simultaneous decline in the magnitude of their exchange values. In the words of Marx, "the same change in productive power which increases the fruitfulness of labour, and, in con-

sequence, the quantity of use values produced by that labour, will diminish the total value of this increased quantity of use values, provided such changes shorten the total labour-time necessary for their production; and vice versa".⁶

What this implies is that the law of expansion of use-value becomes of necessity the law of decline of exchange value or the accentuation of the law of surplus use value should require weakening of the law of surplus exchange value. This is possible only when the law of surplus exchange value functions not as exchange value earmarked for the purchase of machinery, raw materials or living labour but as one acting as use value of living labour engaged in a productive process and accelerating the productiveness of living labour. But this is against the capitalist mode of production and in conformity with the socialist mode although in a real capitalist world this antagonism is sharpened with the greater and greater accumulation of surplus exchange value undergoing metamorphosis into higher and higher productiveness of labour.⁷

Therefore under the socialist mode of production the constant capital (in the sense Marx defined it) loses its exchange value and therefore does not enter into the value formations of an article. Value formations determined exclusively by the socially necessary labour time are nevertheless influenced by the magnitude of use value content underlying an exchange value entity like the constant capital; the higher this magnitude, the lower becomes the socially necessary labour time and lower becomes the exchange value of an article. This is true under both capitalism and socialism with the difference that under the former this falling tendency of exchange value of an article is weaker than it is under the latter, because while the socialist mode of production in terms of its basic law can use only the use-value content of surplus exchange value or constant capital, the capitalist mode of production cannot but use the exchange

value content of constant capital and include the exchange value of constant capital into the cost-price or the exchange value of a commodity.

This difference in roles that capital plays under capitalism and socialism having close correspondence to the difference between their respective value formations has been totally ignored by all socialist economic thinkers who as a result, in spite of their marathon "price-debates" preceding the 1965 reforms, could come to no agreement except the umpire-like September-directives of the Central Committee of the CPSU. In this connection Lenin's position as enunciated in his *State and Revolution* was clear, although he did not refer to any basic economic law characterising the socialist mode of production. Lenin was of the opinion (closely corroborating the position adopted by Marx against Lassalle) that under socialism from the whole of social labour of society engaged in the productive process, it is necessary to deduct a reserve fund, a fund for the expansion of production, for the replacement of "worn-out" machinery, and so on; then also from the means of consumption must be deducted a fund for the expenses of management, for schools, hospitals, homes for the aged, and so on.

In terms of a two-sector socialist growth model, Lenin's position can be formulated as follows:

Dept I. Total value of social labour engaged in producing producers' goods (V_1)

Dept II. Total value of social labour engaged in producing consumers' goods (V_2)

$V_1 =$ Current wage + reserve fund for expansion or replacement for both departments.

$V_2 =$ Current wage + surplus for unproductive expenditure + a surplus to meet the requirements of Dept. I.⁸

In a single reproduction scheme or in an expanded one, the conditions of equilibrium would be $V_1 = V_2$; it holds good even if there exist wage disparities between the two departments. What is important here to

stress is that in no department's value process, the amount of constant capital (in the sense Marx used it) used up makes any entry. Replacement of "worn-out" machinery takes place from the reserve fund, i.e., from the already realized value produced by V_1 's living labour and hence no question can indeed arise of attributing once more the value of constant capital to help its entry into the value process. In the same way, the value of the reserve fund meant for expansion of both departments ceases to be the exclusive labour value of V_1 's living labour, when V_2 supports it with a surplus of equal value magnitude. In other words, when machinery from V_1 is transferred to V_2 for being used up in the latter's productive process, from the point of view of total social labour, there can arise no question of paying price to V_1 for its machinery supplied to V_2 . Consecutively, that machinery cannot enter into the value process generated by the department V_2 .

It is quite obvious that the value formations suggested by this model are a derivative of—but bears a crucial difference with—the model Marx had developed in order to analyse the capitalist mode of production governed by the law of surplus value. While in the capitalist model, the law of surplus value has decisive role in accelerating the size of total surplus exchange value, in the above model, the reserve fund of surplus socially necessary labour plays a decisive role in accelerating only the productivity of living labour with a view to causing a decline in exchange value embodied in consumer goods and a rise in quantities of use-value through increased per living labour production. This is indeed the crux of the matter differentiating the socialist mode of production from the capitalist one.⁹

(To be continued)

References

1. M. Dobb—*On Economic Theory and Socialism*, London 1953.
—*An Essay On Economic Growth and Planning*, Lon-

don 1960.

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- Except Dobb, there are many others like O. Lange, Bergson and Bavkov who wrote on different aspects of Soviet planning or socialist planning and showed no fundamental departure from Dobb's position so far as the theory of socialist mode of production was concerned.
2. Dobb's writings have been referred to. In this particular context one may read his lecture in the Delhi School of Economics published in his *Papers on Capitalism, Development and Planning* Routledge, London 1967). Oscar Lange's views on the subject are available in his monograph on *Essay on Economic Planning* (Asia, 1960) or his latest work, *Political Economy*, Vol 1, Polish Scientific Publishers & Pergamon Press, 1963, Ch. 3 Pp. 49-91.
 3. *Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R.* (Moscow, 1952) Pp 45-47.
 4. The basic economic law under feudalism does operate even when the means of production i.e. land units, are under community or tribal ownership. But as we all know, such community ownership of the means of production in course of its maturity yields place to private ownership of the means of production and the production cycle—as described by Marx—use value - money - increased use value evolves itself into commodity - money - commodity and in its last stage succumbs to the growth of capitalist production cycle of money - commodity - increased money or Exchange value - commodity - increased Exchange value. That the basic economic law under capitalism does not contain ownership pattern (private or public) as a necessary ingredient of the process is amply clear from the study of con-

temporary trends in monopoly capital in the U.S.A. or Western Europe. Lenin admitted this while he advocated state capitalism in the Soviet Union where at that time social or public ownership of the means of production was the basic pattern.

5. *Capital*, Vol I (Moscow 1954) Pp 45-46.
6. *Ibid.* Pp. 46: Marx used value and exchange value interchangeably.
7. In his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (Italian) Marx in course of his refutation of Lassalle's position that under socialism the worker will receive "the whole proceeds of his labour", said:
"What we have to deal with here (in analysing the programme of the party) is a communist society not as it has developed on its own foundation, but on the contrary as it emerges from capitalist society."
From Lenin's *State and Revolution—Selected Works*, Vol VII (Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1937) Pp. 83-84.
8. Here the unproductive expenditure suggests the expenditure on management, schools, hospitals etc.
9. Most socialist economists in their growth models ignored the difference. Prof Lange developed a model of underdeveloped countries by applying Marx's model of capitalist mode of production. Maurice Dobb's model of growth puts stress merely on the creation of the capital base through planning to be followed by consumption goods production, as if his entire pre-occupation was with planning and planned relations between product-flows rather than with a definite social purpose for which planning is just an instrument. The present writer has not yet seen Prof M. Kalecki's work on the theory of socialist growth model.

Allende Wins Another Test

A. K. ESSACK

THE silence of Chile has been shattered by the storms and thunder of a class struggle ever since President Allende's Popular Unity Coalition Government took power on

November 3 two years ago.

The struggle has taken many forms and the battle arena has shifted from the streets to the courts, back to the streets into the legislative chamber.

DECEMBER 16, 1972

One phase in the trial of strength between the peasants and workers who support the government and the property owners, a section of whom are linked with the U.S. mining monopolies, was the strike of lorry-owners.

What in other countries would have been a local issue became a national one. For a few days the whole transport system of the country was paralysed. In those critical days the bus-owners also joined in, while the businessmen closed their shops in an act of solidarity. A section of the doctors, teachers and students also came out in full sympathy for the lorry-owners who had gone on strike because Dr Allende had said that a section of the transport system would be nationalised, in the south of Chile.

It soon became clear that the petty bourgeoisie—the small property owners, small businessmen and professional people—had been pushed into the forefront in order to cause confusion and chaos and thus force the army into overthrowing the Allende government.

Allende, who has already established a reputation as a skilful parliamentarian, has shown himself tough and resolute in this new crisis. Against the united front of the petty bourgeoisie he called for a united front of the working class. It worked. Miners who had been on strike went back to the pits and the factories continued to support him. Soon public transport was back to normal. The five Opposition parties then called for a general strike to support the lorry-owners.

Not only did it fizzle out but in the heart of the middle class area, the centre of resistance, there was normal activity. It was clear that the population had turned against the disrupters. The lorry-owners who were arrogant a few days before now put out feelers for a settlement. It is they who had the white flag in hand. A petty bourgeoisie has still to stage a strike which could succeed against a government of workers. This phase in the struggle ended in the

defeat of reaction and victory for Allende's Popular Unity Government.

But an attempt was certainly made. As the class struggle spilled outside the boundaries of Chile, it became clear that there were powerful forces outside who wanted to bring about the downfall of the Allende Government. Within a week of the lorry-owners' strike, one of the largest mining groups in Chile, whose assets have been nationalised, made a bid to seize the cargo of a ship carrying Chilean copper.

It got two court orders, one from a French court and another from the Dutch High court, to seize the copper. How foreign courts can interfere in the internal affairs of another country, how they can decide who owns the copper is a legal mystery. But it did reveal the links that international monopoly capital has and its institutions and agents. However, Kennecott, the mining company in question, and the courts had not reckoned with the growing international solidarity of the working class. Both the French and Dutch workers refused to unload the copper and thus prevented its seizure.

The court attachment of copper gave Allende a marvellous opportunity to forge national unity against imperialism. It was not Allende's copper but Chilean copper that was being seized. On the platform at a mammoth mass meeting sat the representative of the opposition Christian Democrats who were supporting the lorry-owners.

In a strong speech he supported Allende and condemned the open robbery of "our copper". The UNCTAD States also moved into action and they passed a stiff resolution which said in no uncertain terms that a nation is sovereign and that it has the right to dispose its natural resources without outside interference. Kennecott Company was isolated both at home and abroad.

The Popular Unity Coalition is a front of the Socialist Party, the Communist Party and other radical groups. It came to power electorally in 1970 on a radical programme "to

end the power of internal and foreign monopoly capital in Chile, to redistribute the land and to bring about the construction of socialism."

As regards nationalisation, its policy was aimed firstly at taking over the copper mines, followed by nitrates and iron. After that, the banks, power, transport, communications, petrol and cement were to be taken over. It was Allende's intended move to take over the southern transport system that brought about the strike.

Unlike most African countries, Chile has a well-established capitalist class as well as a powerful land-owning group which owns thousands of hectares. This country of ten million people has also a small, but noisy and troublesome middle class. When Allende assumed office, Regis Debray, author of *Revolution in a Revolution?* posed the question which was in the minds of many in an interview with Allende.

Debray: "How can the transition from a bourgeois system to a more democratic, more revolutionary, more proletarian system be achieved without a break? Who is using whom and who is taking whom for a ride?"

Allende: "The lesson is that each country has its own particular circumstances... We have arrived through the polling booths. Apparently, it could be said that we are reformists, but we have done things to show that we mean to make a revolution".

The latter statement is correct as far as the banks and copper mines are concerned. Of 22 large banks, 13 have been acquired including the Bank of London and South America (BOLSA). In February this year the commanding heights, namely the five large copper mines including Anaconda, Kennecott and Carro, were taken over. For the Chilean people this would mean an extra 510 million shillings.

It is over compensation that the struggle has broken out. The mining companies laid claim to \$800 million. But an independent commission said that the first two

companies should get nothing, for between 1930 and 1972 they invested between £50 million and £80 million and drew £1,566 million. This meant that it is the companies which owed the people of Chile money and not the other way round.

After raking in millions, the foreign companies still demand compensation for nationalisation and get away with it.

The agrarian reform is being implemented but the Allende Government cannot claim much credit. The agrarian problem is also a national one, for when the colonisers came, the Arucanian Indians, contemptuously called Mapuches, were expelled from their lands. Now they are fighting to get back their lands. They number over a million.

According to law, ownership of arable land is restricted to 80 hectares. But those familiar with such legislative enactments know that this gives scope for evasion and circumvention. Landowners, in order to comply with the letter of the law, just divide the land within the family, parcelling it out to their children, relatives and faithful retainers.

MIR Moves In

It is here that the *Mouvement Izquierda Revolutionaria* (MIR) has stepped in. Its base is the working class town of Concepcion and its university. Its cadres are from the universities and factories. Unlike Allende, these revolutionary youths do not believe that socialism can be built by legislative enactments from parliament. It is class struggle in the streets and factories and against the *Latifundia* which will decide the issue. Its prestige is high.

Under its leadership, the landless peasants and small landowners have been mobilised and land has been seized and redistributed. Land reforms by parliament have been implemented by force. They have been particularly successful with the Arucanian Indians in the Cautin region. In 1970, the quota of land set aside for agrarian reform was 1000 farms. In fact, 1400 farms

were expropriated. In 1971, 2,000 farms were taken over.

MIR's actions have annoyed some of the timid parties of Allende's coalition who have branded it as "adventuristic". But Allende is astute and he has given strict instructions to his police and the army not to interfere with the TOMAS (take-overs) even though they were "illegal". The conscious youth have thus been given the authority to go ahead and carry out the much belated democratic and agrarian reforms.

Because MIR was able to spread the class struggle in the countryside and thus politicise the peasantry, the lorry-owners and landowners were unable to rally the small peasants on their side.

Allende's fight against imperialism has the support of the socialist and the non-aligned camp. China and Cuba have backed his moves on nationalisation and the Soviet Union has agreed to buy 130,000 tons of copper. At the same time it has advanced a credit of 2,000 million shillings. Hungary has agreed to take 5,000 tons of copper.

A factor in the struggle has been the loyalty of the army. Imperialism could not do to Allende what it succeeded in doing to Torres in Bolivia. While the army is opposed to the creation of a people's militia, it has supported the Allende Government during its two years of office. In fact it controls many of the provinces as martial law has been declared in these. Because of the high political consciousness of the working class the army is very nationalistic. Its head, General Prats, says that it will support the Allende Government until and unless he violates the constitution.

Allende in a very shrewd move dissolved his Cabinet and brought in two army men into his new Ministry. What was more, he gave the key post of Minister of the Interior to General Prats who had to negotiate with the striking lorry-owners. Small wonder that the lorry-owners gave in.

Alongside the 28,000-strong army there is the para-militia of equal

number. The Western press has been quick to point out that this rapidly armed itself from arms imported illegally from Cuba. The key question in the coming period is whether it will go along with the working class when the internal monopolies are taken over by the Allende Government. In such a phase new alliances will be formed and present alliances could well separate.

Theatre

Going Absurd

HITEN GHOSH

BOHURUPEE staged Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* in Bengali (*Gandar*—Translation: Sinaoli Mitra; Direction: Tripti Mitra) at Kalamandir on December 7. The play—excellent entertainment in itself—is marred by insensitivity to the high seriousness of Ionesco's purpose. What the dramatist intends to be a tragic parody of the human situation is turned into a light comedy which signifies nothing. True, Ionesco exults in much witty burlesque, but he invests an apparently funny situation with deep tragedy. He is a poet whose tragic sense of life finds expression in a curious blend of the weird and the grotesque. His anguish at the human predicament releases itself not in laughter, nor indeed in tears, but in a sense of futility of both. There is a certain self-conscious detachment in Ionesco's attitude, which is so different from either pure comedy or pure tragedy, but is related to both. Tripti Mitra's direction fails to capture this subtle essence of Ionesco's theatre—the peculiar quality which reflects both anguished involvement and comic alienation. Not all Bohurpee's undoubted skill in acting and stagecraft can redeem this failure.

Rhinoceros has been acclaimed as the most intelligible of Ionesco's plays and this apparent intelligibility may have led the director to focus on the simplest aspect of its meaning. But the simplicity is a mirage, for the

unwary. Ionesco's plays have a dream-like inconsequence and complexity, the deceptive evenness of their surface concealing an explosive disorder within. Usually, the disorder invades the structure of the play and seeps into the language. But this occurs so subtly that a sort of verisimilitude is somehow preserved. Thus *Rhinoceros* has almost the appearance of a conventional plot-structure and its language and actions show an apparent logical frame. It comes very near achieving a story and characterization. This is what makes the play look so easy and simple on the surface. But the bizarre theme of human metamorphosis shatters this surface of reasonableness. This contrast between theme and structure is a part of Ionesco's concept of the absurd, for it lies at the basis of human existence. The characters who parade their rationality most are the readiest to become irrational when the crunch comes.

But the basic dilemma is inherent in the human situation itself irrespective of the individual's capacity to remain human. The hero's ultimate solitude is pitted against the general pull of collective solidarity which at times may seem more human than nonconformism. Ionesco recalls the situation of Hitler's growing popularity in the early thirties and turns it into an occasion for depicting the tussle between our individuality and social feeling. One begins to doubt one's own sanity when all the others behave insanely, one even longs to be insane. The failure to behave like others is felt to be a burden, an embarrassment. It is a cross to be borne alone. Bérenger's failure to turn himself into a pachyderm is both a choice and necessity—a necessity of which he seeks to make a pathetic virtue. This choice and necessity of his fate make him a tragic hero, a victim, one who typifies the very fate of humanity itself. Thus on its universal plane, his agony is a replica of man's sense of exile in a world that does not understand his humanity. And here Ionesco strikes the deeper

chords by showing a conflict within the human soul, between nature and reason or humanity. Turning into rhinoceros is actually a surrender to the lure of animality—a primitive and uncomplex existence where this conflict is overcome, as in religion, political mythology or mental disorder. In resisting this lure Bérenger goes against part of his own nature, for he is a social and a natural being. His dilemma is to preserve his individuality and yet co-operate with the rest of mankind in a rational community, to accept his estrangement with nature and yet live as part of nature. Thus in *Rhinoceros*, Ionesco reveals the essential dilemma of man in nature and society.

Tripti Mitra's direction of the play does not either pose this dilemma or present the contrast between tragedy and comedy inherent in Ionesco's fable. The climactic incident of a rhinoceros pulling down the staircase of the office-building fails to achieve its effect of a dreadful menace closing in on the normal life of everyday. Indeed not for once is the epidemic of 'rhinocertis' as a dreaded contagion conveyed to the audience. It all remains an egregious joke to the end without striking the serious note underlying the joke. This weakness of the production comes out particularly in the transformation scenes where the grimness of the mockery is never suggested in the acting or through stagecraft. This failure becomes most offensive in the case of Daisy whose subtle feminine logic of social solidarity is not brought out in the final conversation with Bérenger. Shnaoli Mitra's acting and gestures in the final scene together with the light effects convey the mood of a children's fable or folk-tale and not that of a satire shot with tragic despair. This impression of a child's picture book is reinforced at the end when shadows of animals loom not as a dark menace but as a visual delight. The rendering of all the characters falters whenever the challenge is to present their true Ionesco flavour. In Ionesco's play those who opt for the life of a rhinoceros have each his own

initial reaction to the phenomenon and an individual course of gradual surrender to it. Ionesco presents a veritable case-book of individual psychology involved in these characters' love of animality. But Bohurupee's acting cannot present these finer shades of characterization in depth. On a naturalistic level all the actors and actresses show a brilliance rarely matched in this country. But a Ionesco play offers little scope for plain naturalistic acting except at the more superficial level of interpretation. Thus the cast fumbles whenever the deeper ambiguities of the roles are to be revealed.

Either Mrs Mitra's direction fails to get the best out of her cast or the latter cannot prove equal to the challenge of the roles. Mr Kaliprasad Ghosh, who plays as good a Bérenger as the direction allows him to, does only make the audience laugh when he tries to convey his dread and anguish. It is clear he does not do so intentionally, but the tenor of the play predetermines the reaction. His intense concern for his own and others, humanity is never meant but is invariably taken as a neurotic's over-reaction to an imaginary evil, as it is seen by his fellows. The complete failure of communication over this between himself and his fellows again provokes only laughter without any touch of seriousness. Here is a failure of communication indeed! Against all this, and perhaps to make up for this, Mr Ghosh as Bérenger suddenly strikes a heroic pose at the end of the play, and melodramatically asserts his resolve to remain human. As Ionesco intends this last-ditch stand made by a lone human to appear both tragic and ludicrous (for what price this humanity after all?), Mr Ghosh's words and gestures seem out of place. Even if they were mock-heroic—they are not, they are heroic—Ionesco's final effect would be missed. The ambivalence of Bérenger's condition, its absurdity is held up to both ridicule and pathos. His non-conformism is never projected as a heroic challenge to the insensibility of the world. This is a cheap

pose foisted on a story of light fun, but badly out of keeping with its own tenor. Both the lightness of treatment and cheaply heroic ending show how miserably even Bohurupee is wedded to the drift of 'popular' taste in this country.

Cinema

The Reluctant Rogue

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

JABAN (directed by Palash Banerjee) is another run-of-the-mill story of a good man turned crook and his final redemption through repentance, told with all the worn-out clichés of the commercialised cinema. Samit Bhanja is a simple and honest factory-worker and Radha Saluja is an orphan living with her maternal uncle and they are in love. They behave alright as the typical screen-lovers with the tete-a-tete on the maidan and the duet on the Ganges, but Radha's uncle designs otherwise. So enters Ajitesh Banerjee, the villain, with rolling eyes and a twisted, mischievous grin and Radha's uncle concedes to his lecherous demands and promises the niece to him. But Samit remains an obstacle; so he has to be taken care of. The hero finds himself the victim of a framed-up charge, the usual kind of situation where logic is the first casualty. While planting the evidence under Samit's bed the villains must have scaled the house-wall or they must have repaired the door after breaking it open, (we don't know what actually happened and don't you dare question the details of the operation, that is the director's prerogative, his "creative" licence). The hero goes behind the bars and the heroine is sacrificed to the rapist's lust. After some time Samit comes out of the prison, yelling vendetta against the villain and in a fit of rage kills him. As he runs away from the law, he sinks into the dark abyss of

the underworld and after some strong-arm training by the experts, graduates into a wholtime crook. Then follow some routine episodes of smuggling, coshing and killing but all these are dull, unexciting pieces marked by a pathetic lack of sense of pace and construction. With all his fowl deeds, Samit however remains a reluctant rogue. He is an unwilling cosher, a half-hearted smuggler and a cowardly killer. He drinks a lot but says he does not like alcohol, although most probably out of consideration for box office once he goes in for a reveller's abandon complete with a song-dance number. He goes to a brothel, allows the girl to sing a full three-minute song, but shrinks when she mentions bed. And such is his magic spell that in a second the hussy also turns into a Savitri, and almost prepares to celebrate Brothers' Day. Samit finds his long-lost fiancée who has now become a prostitute and from here, the film goes completely haywire. The director seems to have lost some vital pages of his script, otherwise how can one explain such a sketchy, scrappy and patched-up denouement? A couple of anaemic fights and some tear-jerking reunion scenes lead to the hero's surrender to the police and in the end we have the classic scene where the heroine utters those same lines which we always hear in our son in the end, the same tear-soaked voice parroting the same words, "Don't be afraid. I will wait for you." Samit Bhanja's acting is just like a monotonous drunken drawl and Radha Saluja has the sage-like capacity to wear a set expression, no matter what the predicament she is in. The other big stars of the Bombay screen have done nothing but lend their names as box-office boosters.

Children's Film Shows

There is a Children's Film Society sponsored by the Government of India which has been in existence for more than a decade. It makes

quite a few films every year, but somehow we in this part of the country do not normally see them. In fact, apart from one or two sporadic screenings by the film societies and other organisations, the public showing of the children's films produced by this society has never been undertaken. Now with the noon-show released of *Bharat Darshan* at Jyoti, a beginning has been made and the credit for this necessary although belated step must go to the local outfit of the Films Division which is in charge of distributing this film. We hope that this will be followed by many more subsequent releases of other such films.

Bharat Darshan is a kind of moralised travelogue in which the camera follows a group of children (selected out of many contestants in an all-India essay competition sponsored by the Children's Film Society) in a cross-country tour. The documentary interest in peoples and places is lost in a silly attempt to cram everything about India's social and cultural heritage into a hundred-minute film. There is a surfeit of homilies and bookish verbiage about national integration and secularism, all spelt in bold capitals. As the credits suggest, most of the shooting has been done by Chidananda Dasgupta, and Khaja Ahmed Abbas has assembled the materials into scenic shape. The duality of approach is evident in the conflicting styles of shooting and editing.

Clippings

A Judgment

In the middle of September the Additional Sessions Judge of west Dinajpur in West Bengal acquitted five labourers of Balurghat of charges of dacoity and murder. Nothing remarkable about this, for many accused are acquitted every day.

But what made the Balurghat judgment remarkable, indeed sensational, was that it identified a senior member

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of Mr Siddartha Shankar Ray's cabinet, Mr Jainal Abedin, as the man who "manufactured a dying declaration" to implicate falsely Kalua, the principal accused. According to the defence case, as summed up by the judge, Mr Abedin bore Kalua a "grudge".

At the time of the dacoity when the dying declaration was "manufactured" Mr Abedin was not a minister because the Marxist-dominated United Front was in power. But he was then, as now, a senior Congress leader in the state.

The local correspondent of a national news agency duly filed a report on the Balurghat judgment. But, for reasons which remain obscure until today, it never saw the light of the day.

On the political grapevine of West Bengal, however, the news travelled fast. But rather than believe political gossip we decided to obtain a certified copy of the judgment from west Dinajpur. This has since been done at great effort and some expense.

The strictures on Mr Abedin are shattering. But such are the standards of political morality these days that he sits pretty both as a minister and as a vice-president of the Pradesh Congress.

(From A Times of India Notebook).

Letters

Peking And CP (ML)

Arani Ghosh (December 2) doubts the authenticity of the document attributed to Kanu Sanyal and five other CPI (ML) leaders (November 4).

1. He questions the accuracy of the reference to Charu Mazumdar as the party's general secretary and not as its chairman. The fact is Charu Mazumdar was always its general secretary but his detractors nicknamed him "Chairman Charu" after his famous article "China's Chairman is Our Chairman". If a letter is to be faked, no one would commit such a stupid mistake.

2. He contends that the Chinese could not have said what the letter attributes to them on guerilla warfare and that Kanu Sanyal could not have endorsed such views on guerilla warfare. Arani Ghosh is entitled to his subjective opinion on this.

3. Then, as to the date of the letter. It does make a reference to the "split into groups and factions" as a result of the left adventurist deviation and suggests that Sushital Roy Chowdhury's death had much to do with this. The letter also says the signatories have nothing to do with any group or faction and want that relationship with groups and factions within the party and outside should be a non-antagonistic one. The reference to the split in the CPI (ML) may not be specific but is there nevertheless. Reference to Bangladesh developments would have been irrelevant in a letter of this kind.

4. How could the leaders get together? With police connivance? Arani Ghosh should know that all the six signatories live in the same prison and the letter could have been written only after all of them were in the same Visakhapatnam Central Jail to face trial in the same conspiracy case. Where is the question of police connivance? And who says the lawyers cannot meet their clients?

The letter first appeared in Telugu, in the CPI (M)'s journal *Prajasakthi*. A news item on the letter was put out by UNI several weeks before the text was published by a New Delhi weekly, *Mainstream* and in *Frontier*.

One of the signatories to the letter, Mr Kellan Venkiah, was out on bail some time ago, when the letter had already been published in Telugu.

From the Telugu journal, *P. lupu*, I find Kellan Venkiah could write a letter from jail correcting a minor inaccuracy in an article on Telengana in the journal. He would certainly have issued a statement from jail, or from outside when he was on bail, disowning the letter to which he was alleged to have been a signatory.

Well, any of the six leaders could

have made declaration disowning it if it was fake.

I wish Arani Ghosh had based his doubts about the authenticity of the letter on mere credible arguments than insinuate "police connivance" and role of "foreign and domestic ruling classes" and the "numerous factions and faction leaders among the Naxalites who are determined at all costs to bolster up their own line(s) even by tampering with facts". And I wish Arani Ghosh had been a little more sure of his facts.

MALLIKARJUNA RAO
New Delhi

When ?

While the Secretary of the Communist Party of India, Andhra Pradesh, stated that Mr K. G. Sathya-murthy and Mr Kondapalli Seetharamayya (CP-ML leaders) were arrested at Vijayawada earlier, and issued a press statement, it was announced on 30-11-72 at 6-05 p.m. in the regional news from Hyderabad that Mr Sathya-murthy had been arrested on the night of 29-11-1972 at Hyderabad. It is unimaginable that the Secretary of the CPI would issue a statement anticipating the arrest of leaders. Therefore it creates a reasonable suspicion that the police have no respect for the rule of law or the Constitution which says that the arrested person should be produced before the Court within 24 hours of his arrest. It creates apprehension of foul play. We demand an immediate judicial enquiry by a High Court judge.

It is learnt that Mr Mallikarjuna Sarma, B.E. student, was arrested at Nalgonda on the night of 14-11-1972 and handed over to the Superintendent of Police, Nalgonda the following day. So far the said person has not been produced before any Court.

P. VENKATESWARLU
Convener
Civil Liberties Committee
Hyderabad, 30-11-72

Arrested

It is a matter of deep regret that Mr Moni Guha, along with several others alleged to be Naxalites, was arrested from the Mohammed Ali Park. Being a regular reader of *Frontier*, Moni Guha is not a new name to me. He is an intellectual of repute who has always refused to be the mouthpiece of State power; probably that is why on some pretext or the other such thinkers and intellectuals are kept out from the masses. It is not the case of one Moni Guha only which needs condemnation; such cases range from hundreds to thousands.

PRADIP MITTER
Calcutta

This And That

I am nobody to dispute or refute your contention, that allegations of massive use of money and administrative machinery in favour of the Orissa Chief Minister "will not seem unwarranted". (December 2) Nobody will cavil at the fact that the Congress went all out to win this vital contest and money was no consideration at all. Allegations of massive use of money and misuse of administrative machinery are not new and people's sympathy naturally goes to those who are not in a position to use, misuse or abuse these weapons to fight an election battle. But when such allegations are made by persons like Mr Biju Patnaik and Mr Biren Mitra, their sympathizers come from outside the ranks of the 'people'. These two gentlemen have never done anything without the help of black money.

Your observation that the outcome of Orissa politics will be decided "not by the people but by inter and inner party manoeuvres" is an insult to the electorate of Cuttack. It is before and during the by-election that the issue has been finally decided by the people themselves. The time is not yet ripe to foretell the future.

SANJAY SEN
Calcutta

Calcutta 71

Mr Probodh Ch. Dutta has discovered *Calcutta 71* as 'disturbing' as the most reactionary newspaper has made such a hullebaloo about the film. It is otherwise "uneven" and the director, Mr Mrinal Sen, without being aware of his total incapability in handling a revolutionary theme, has completely failed in his attempt, according to him.

Tut, tut, Mr Dutta. I pity you for your abject dependence on the reactionary newspapers in finding out the disturbing content of *Calcutta 71*.

ROBI SEN GUPTA
Calcutta

Unemployed

Being a regular reader of your anti-bourgeois weekly I feel that the anguish of unemployed youth, numerous like me, will find its place in your columns.

The myth of Punjab being the most prosperous State is no more. Unemployment, particularly among the educated sections, shatters the self-confidence and the positive qualities which one possesses. Employment exchanges were established in the district headquarters. But do these exchanges work honestly? Do they help the unemployed youth? As per rule, the exchange office must help the candidates at least once in a month to look for a job. The cardholders, alas, keep on waiting for such calls for years. When we faithfully renew our cards at the fixed time why can't the exchanges become honest and frank in helping us? The clerk and the employment officers unashamedly demand money for issuing the cards. How can an unemployed man meet these requests? Unless society wakes up to the plight of unemployed youth their anger shall demolish the existing myth of stability and prosperity.

HARDEV SINGH
Muktsar (Faridkot),
Punjab

Calcutta 72

A. L. in his "Divine Revelations" (December 2, 1972) has quite rightly spoken of the necessary connection between the "extraordinary" puja celebrations this year and the resurgence of Congress power in the State. Being temporarily relieved of the nightmarish days of 1971, the reactionary forces are desperately trying to divert the attention of our youth to such festivals, youth fairs and the like, and thus to release in part the vast repressed sentiments accumulated over the years. They have come to realise that all the high talk of "constructive utilization of youthful energy" is, under present conditions, next to impossible.

Hence the colourful puja festival of this year, with youths not necessarily "goondas" drinking and dancing, was not an expression of spontaneous joy in a "free city, but an outburst of the deep-seated sorrow in many hearts. They find problems in every walk of their life and seek temporary solace in such joys. Hence our progressive government has thought it to be a sacred duty to 'help' these "unfortunates" to forget the problems. Perhaps this explains the extension of the puja celebrations.

Well, this is Calcutta 72.
PROBODH GOPAL DHAR CHAKRABARTI
Shibpur, Howrah.

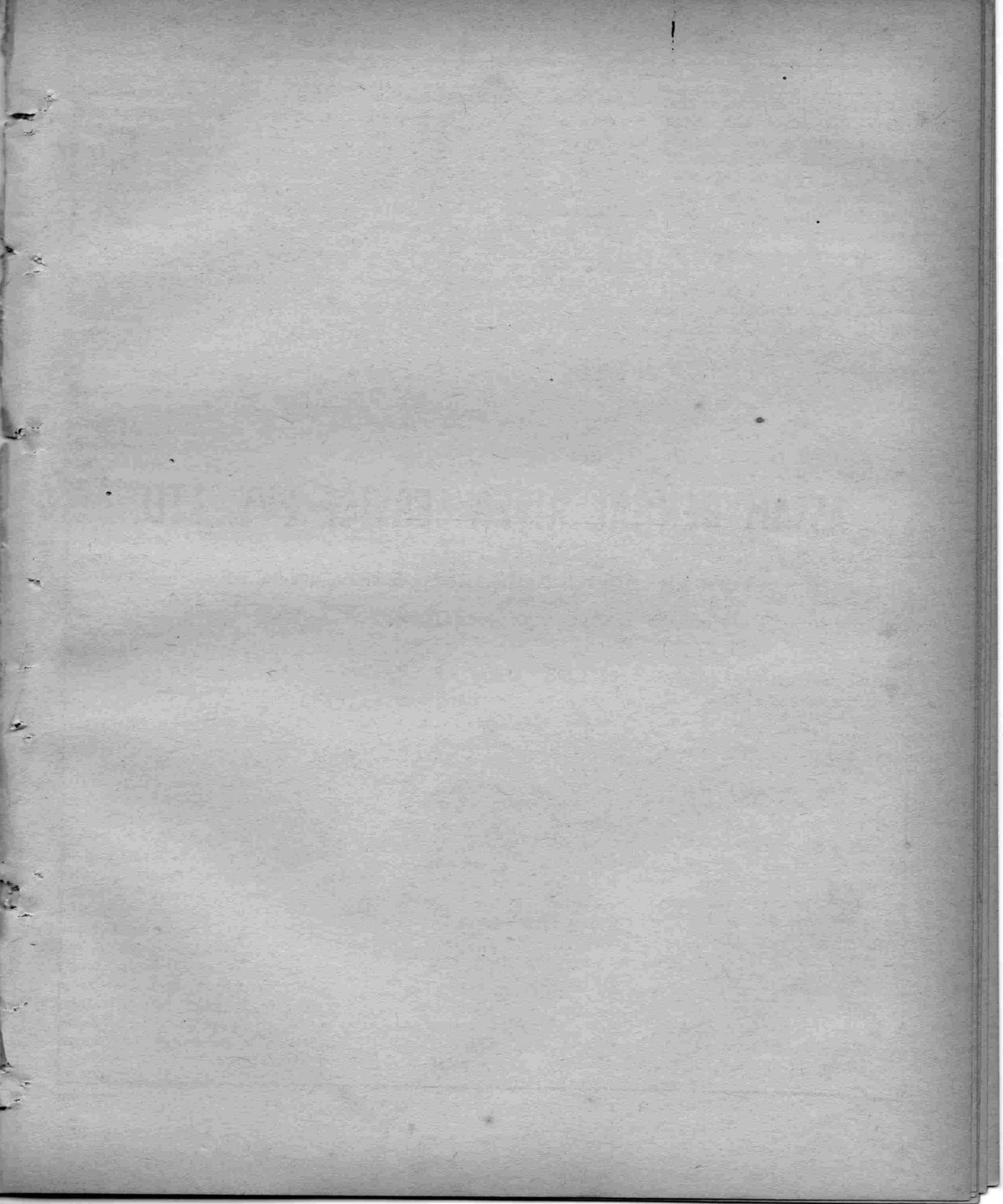
Double-Talk

India the other day took the initiative in the UN Special Political Committee to sponsor a resolution calling upon the white minority regime in South Africa to end all forms of physical and mental torture and other acts of terror against prisoners detained for opposing apartheid. The leader of the Indian delegation strongly criticised the gruesome and barbarous methods of torture.

This resolution with the same force of indignation could have been introduced in the Indian Parliament against the fascist Ray government of West Bengal.

M. N. D. NAIR
Trivandrum

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