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THE LEFT DEBACLE

PRESIDENT de Gaulle has won a resounding electoral victory, the greatest since the inception of the Third Republic. Without being niggardly one may yet point out that it was all of a pattern. The failure of the 1848-50 Revolution was followed by a smashing electoral victory of Napoleon III. Similarly in 1871 Adolphe Thiers not only massacred the Communards, but also annihilated the socialists and radicals in the subsequent polls. Nothing fails more resoundingly than failure at street barricades; the recent French elections merely provide one more illustration of this maxim.

If many people had been expecting a Gaullist victory, the Communists had hoped to repeat 1936 when a Popular Front came to power in the wake of a series of strikes and occupation of factories. The CP General Secretary, Waldeck Rochet, was shedding his most honest tears in defending the Party's record of "orderly and wise" conduct during the recent disturbances. The Gaullists, on the other hand, successfully conjured up the image of an insurrection-minded totalitarian party that must be defeated in order to save French democracy. It was well in accordance with the good old rules of a pre-election slanging match. The reason why a good many voters were swayed by this factor was the ambiguous role of the CP for a brief moment before de Gaulle's announcement calling for elections. M Mitterand, the Left Federation leader, had demanded the Premiership for himself; the CP supported Mitterand. Then Mr Mendes-France also entered the fray. One had the impression that the Left had nearly bagged it and that de Gaulle would abdicate power in precisely the same way as Messieurs Felix Gaillard, Guy Mollet and Vincent Auriol had done ten years earlier after the Algerian coup. But then most people forgot that de Gaulle has been a Maoist of a sort: he firmly believes that political power grows out of the barrel of a gun. Time and again he entered politics riding on a gun-barrel and left whenever he thought that the gun had deserted him.

But then Mao has also said that no arms can be a match for a courageous and determined people. Had the French Communist leaders spent a little less of their time at Stalin's feet and meditated a while on the thoughts of the Chairman, they might have called the grandiose bluff that de Gaulle is.

The June elections do not prove the impossibility of an earlier May revolution. In sheer numbers the activists and sympathizers of the May revolt far outnumbered the opponents who were rarely to be seen on the streets except at the fag end. According to most serious newspapers of the world, practically every section of the population was then clamouring for a radical change in the method and style of government. The total incompetence of the Left and the firmness of de Gaulle completely altered the picture. The electorate merely rubber-stamped the defeat of the Left that fought shy of the battle.

An important factor behind the Gaullist success has been the further consolidation within the Right. No Rightist politician has openly campaigned against de Gaulle. M. Pompidou, despite an occasional shaft or two, showed great consideration for the "Central" party of Jean Lecauuet, a consistent anti-Gaullist both in the 1965 Presidential elections and in the General Elections of March 1967. Nevertheless, the vacillating middle swerved en bloc to the official UDR which increased its votes by 1.2 million between March 5, 1967 and June 23, 1968; the percentage rose from 37.73 p.c. to 43.65 p.c. The Independent Republicans of Giscard d'Estaing, another governmental party, also marginally improved its position. M. Lecauuet's party is considerably weakened, having lost one-fifth of its total strength.

On the Left, the Communists and the Federation each lost nearly 6 lakh votes (about 2.5 p.c.), so that their percentages came down to 20.03 and 16.50 respectively. However, Mendes-France's tiny PSU that threw in its lot unreservedly with the striking workers and students made a very notable 50 p.c. gain: it won an additional vote of 4 lakhs nearly, raising its share to some 4 p.c. of the total. It is probable that the disillusioned Communists went in for PSU this time.

In all, the Left as a whole has lost some 4.90 per cent of the total vote; or, the net swing to the Right is no more than this magnitude. In terms

of seats, however, the Left has suffered a major catastrophe at the second round of elections when the number of contestants came down to 2, sometimes to 3. Out of a total of 470 seats in metropolitan France the Gaullists raised their number from 231 to 358. The Communists and the Left Federation found their strength less than halved: for the former it stands at 34 against 72 previously, and the respective figures for the latter are 57 and 118. The Centrists now command 27 seats, having lost 11.

From now on de Gaulle will have a very comfortable time in the National Assembly, but not in the country at large. The various movements that sprang up in May are surely dormant today, but it would be rash to write these off as just another midsummer madness. Now that the elections are over, the disgruntled rank and file of the CP may well ask for a thorough postmortem on the all-round failure of the Party. The months ahead are sure to provide some pretty interesting news from that ever-exciting country.

Galling

If you have tears, prepare to shed them now, but not for the French Communist Party. Monsieur Waldeck Rochet, last month, decided to choose "order" and "political wisdom". The French electorate too have chosen: if it is going to be a choice between two competing conventional wisdoms, they will choose de Gaulle and the corresponding conservative tradition. It is silly, and much worse, for the functionaries of the Communist Party now to complain that they have been taken for a ride and that Papa de Gaulle had no business to depict the elections as a battle between the forces of "totalitarian Communist" and those defending civic laws and order. Of course the foxy President had the prerogative for resorting to ordinary campaign polemics: everything is fair in love and war—and parliamentary elections, which the French CP, the

paragon of responsible behaviour and democratic virtues, chose. You maketh the bed, and you jolly well will have to lie in it.

In the aftermath, it is now almost inevitable that there would be a rash of Right reaction in France, at least for some time. Compare the situation with what it was even five weeks ago. The entire country was in a state of siege, nearly 10 million workers—including those in the countryside—were out on strike, factories and plants had been siezed, the students in schools and universities had set up soviets, government departments were empty, post and communications were suspended, trains were at a standstill, planes were grounded, petrol had dried up, the supply of food in Paris and other metropolitan cities was running dangerously low, Prime Minister Pompidou was sending out abject surrender notes over the radio almost every hour, old man de Gaulle himself was in a Hamletesque funk. There were moments during those halcyon final days in May when the Papa nearly made up his mind to quit—and hand the country over to the Revolution. But suddenly he discovered the Communist Party, the dithering Communist Party, and he knew he could negotiate his way out.

Because it was a Communist Party which is afraid of radical change, quelle horreur. By now it is a solidly respectable party, bourgeois to the core, obesity being its sole distinguishing mark. Memories of the Resistance are the only capital it can flaunt, but the Resistance, alas, is a quarter of a century old. When the students revolted in early May, the bureaucrats of the CP at first attempted to sabotage the movement through an outpour of invectives. Nobody listened to King Canute; flouting the injunction of the great CP, young workers in their hordes started joining the striking students. As the revolutionary frenzy threatened to blanket the country, Monsieur Waldeck Rochet, exhibiting a breath-taking feat of 'reverse tailism', tried to claim a part of the glory: what was till a while ago the handwork of provocateurs suddenly became a-go-go.

But no, whatever the external pressure, it simply was not possible for the French Communist Party to don a role for which it had not made any preparation at all, whether psychological or in terms of logistics. It was just one step from Revolution: the masses were ready, the intellectuals were ready, the administration had collapsed, the property-owners were gripped by panic. Notwithstanding all this, sorry, there could be no revolution, because the Communist Party was not ready. Dog-in-the-manger fashion, the CP would neither lead the insurrection, nor would it step aside to allow others to lead it. Scared stiff, it surrendered as soon as President de Gaulle threatened with the army and the paratroops. The CP chose: instead of acting as the vanguard of the Revolution, it chose to take on the job of blackleg, smashing the revolt of the masses. The slogan changed once more: 'On to the barricades' overnight became 'On to the polls' and 'On to the negotiating table for 15 per cent wage increase.'

The setback the French people have now suffered owing to the great betrayal on the part of the Communist Party may or may not be temporary, but there are certain more generic issues involved. The French case need not be unique. In several countries around the world the Communist Party is being ruled over by people who are sans conviction and sans courage: patisserie has entered their soul. And yet being the Communist Party, they inherit the charisma as well as the proprietary right for the interpretation of Marxism; out of a force of habit, the masses will look up to them for guidance. To save the Communist Party and the movement of the masses from the reactionary clutches of these functionaries at the top should itself constitute, in today's context, one of the major revolutionary tasks.

NOTICE

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Business Manager
Frontier

A Mistaken Approach

The Government of India will no doubt watch with bated breath the result of the visit of the Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army, Gen. Yahya Khan, to Moscow as the head of a military mission in search of arms aid from the Soviet Union. Earlier this year it had shown an unconscionable touchiness over Mr Kosygin's visit to Pakistan and there was childish jubilation in New Delhi when the Soviet Premier made an unscheduled detour on his return journey to halt for a few hours in the Indian capital to assuage the Government's feelings. It seems the Government of India is still harbouring a delusion that it has a greater right to even an appearance of parity in the Soviet favours than Pakistan, and Soviet attitudes towards the two countries of the subcontinent makes it jittery. Much of this derives from India's present relations with China which, the Government thinks, entitle it to greater consideration from the Soviet Union than Pakistan with its unconcealed friendship for Peking. That Pakistan, because of its non-alignment in the Sino-Soviet dispute, is more advantageously placed than we are with our commitment is conveniently forgotten.

It should have been obvious by now that the Soviet initiative in mediating in the Indo-Pakistan conflict of 1965 was not purely utilitarian. The Tashkent Agreement was an instrument of its foreign policy, and through it the Soviet Union has been able to project itself in the subcontinent—a wish which had remained unfulfilled in spite of a decade of Indo-Soviet trade and aid. In this matter also, as in many others in international affairs, Pakistan has been quick to grasp the significance of the development and is poised for turning the Soviet presence in the area to its advantage. It has given a new dimension to Pakistan's foreign policy, and, to be fair, it should be admitted that President Ayub Khan and his colleagues have proved themselves adepts in this triangular tight-rope walking. They have falsified all Indian anticipations

that Sino-Pakistan friendship will strain Pakistan's relations with the USA and make it unacceptable to the Soviet Union; or that China will cool after Mr Bhutto's exit. The Indian refusal to recognise the reality, however, persists. The failure of an earlier Pakistani mission to secure military hardware from the Soviet Union gladdened the Government, and there was much rejoicing over reports that Mr Kosygin had not responded warmly to Mr Ayub Khan's suggestion for curtailment of Soviet arms supplies to India. Efforts will perhaps be made on diplomatic and other levels so that the latest military mission meets the same fate. It does not matter much whether Gen. Yahya Khan succeeds or not, for the Soviet Union cannot, and will not, resist for ever Pakistani importunity unless it is prepared to throw away one of the major gains it reaped from the trouble Mr Kosygin took at Tashkent.

Neither sulks nor hysterics will solve our problem. They will only cramp our style, if we have any, in international relations and make our dependence on other countries for both defence and development—as the Government views them—absolute. There is a limit to which a country will go to mollify us, and that limit is reached when our expectations cut into that country's self-interest. There is no reason why the Soviet Union should not be as much interested in the mad arms race between India and Pakistan as the USA is, for it makes an opening for the Soviet Union to mould the policies of both. And the Soviet Union has to prepare itself for the coming confrontation, not with the USA but with China. To end our predicament much more than summer visits to sundry countries by the Prime Minister and periodical exchange of views with Presidents Tito and Nasser is needed. The Government will not be able to avoid disappointment and rebuff as long as it persists in its present attitude towards Pakistan or, for that matter, China. The areas of disagreement will widen with time and new disputes, like the Farakka barrage, crop up, even if the travails of a shooting war now and again and

its disastrous effects on the country's economy are left out of count. The new turn in Soviet-Pakistan relations should have induced the Government of India to take a fresh look into its policy towards Pakistan and initiate moves to resolve all outstanding disputes, including Kashmir. Myopes may regard the price as heavy but it will not be so compared to what the two countries have already paid and will have to pay if the disputes are allowed to linger.

Khe Sanh To Saigon

So the Khe Sanh drama has ended in a manner than which nothing could have been more desirable to the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong. General Giap's strategy has again succeeded, and again in a manner that the enemy could not anticipate. The Americans have persistently underestimated the strength and will of Vietnam's liberation forces and consistently miscalculated the moves in the struggle for liberation. Yet Johnson and his aides go on deluding themselves about the course of the war. The USA is unbeatable in Vietnam, said General Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in New York last week, adding: "I suggest that the bloody losses suffered by the enemy during Tet, at Khe Sanh, in the A shau Valley, and in many other lesser known actions, were in total a major defeat which will affect the course of the war." Within three days came the announcement that the Khe Sanh Marine base would be abandoned by those who had inflicted such "bloody losses". Equally strangely, those who had suffered such losses were, according to the Americans' own estimate, sending 20,000 men into South Vietnam every month to fight alongside the guerillas of the National Liberation Front. In other words, the North Vietnamese forces, which General Wheeler and others apparently regard as virtually incapacitated, have been able to increase the most effective element of their aid to the Vietcong three or four times in spite of what the Americans claim to have been crippling losses.

This then is how the losses are affecting the course of the war.

The official explanation that the withdrawal from Khe Sanh reflects new strategic thinking has carried little conviction even within the USA. The plain truth is that the Americans have been licked at Khe Sanh and they know it. During the siege of the Marine base hardly anybody doubted that General Giap could overrun the base if he wished. Yet he refrained from another Dienbienphu while keeping the enemy in constant fear of it. Apart from the heavy losses he inflicted on the Marines by ceaseless shelling, he totally destroyed their nerves and morale. American humiliation was complete, but by stopping short of an all-out assault he was able to minimize his own losses. And since all the Marines could do was to try to survive, he was able to ensure, according to the Americans, uninterrupted supply of men and arms into South Vietnam. After he had achieved this and also demonstrated that he could take the base if he wished, he quietly lifted the siege, again surprising the enemy by an unanticipated move. Now the Americans are pulling out while the going is good, at least not as bad as it would be if the unpredictable Giap should again decide to do anything about the already battered base.

It seems that the lesson is now going to be repeated in Saigon. The Vietcong have stepped up their guerilla action in and around the South Vietnamese capital, evidently with the objective of isolating it and breaking its morale. The blowing up of a vital bridge over the weekend must have been a major shock to both the military authorities and the civil population in Saigon. Civilian morale is already low; the military authorities are increasingly frustrated by failure to stop the Vietcong rocket attacks from hideouts around and within the city. Possibility of a major new Vietcong offensive has spread panic but again the actual course of the Vietcong action will defeat anticipation, and to the military consequences will be added the cumulative psychological effect of suspense and total insecurity.

If things move the way they are going, Saigon itself may have to be abandoned. The Americans' claims that they would win the war have now given place to the more modest stand that they will at least not be defeated. But the course of the war has already put even the latter in grave doubt. The USA can be beaten as it will be, howsoever it may then choose to describe its forced withdrawal from Vietnam.

The Split

A correspondent writes :

The crisis in the Communist Party of India (Marxist) can no longer be papered over. During the last one year, expulsions from the party—sometimes in dribbles, sometimes more wholesale—have taken place in West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Madras, Kerala and Assam. Now the ejection of some of the most prominent veterans in Andhra has made a shambles of the party in that State. Even on Mr Sundarayya's own admission, at least fifty per cent of the Andhra cadres are going to go out of the orbit of the party on account of the latest expulsions. The demoralisation of spirit amongst those who stay behind can scarcely be ignored either. Quite plainly, the Andhra story is the culmination of what had been happening in the party for some time: the central leadership, after the 1967 elections, was fast losing grip, rumblings of discontent over the party's current strategy had been spreading with every day, and, here and there, communications had almost totally broken down between the restless middle cadres and those controlling the party apparatus. The nodal point of expulsions merely indicates that the formalisation of the differences through public polemics can no longer be avoided.

It is all a great pity. If the statements of the party functionaries are taken at their face value, what they say suggests that much of the difference has centred

round the question of the proper characterisation of the Soviet Union lorded over by Messrs Brezhnev and Kosygin: whether it is already an imperialist Power, or whether it is still a socialist State but is showing proclivities for chumminess with imperialist Powers. There is a parallel quarrel too: is India still a colony of the Western Powers, or has she progressed to the stage of a State ruled by the national bourgeoisie, who however continue to be in alliance with the marauding imperialists from abroad?

Let the wrath of the dialectical gods descend on us, these are but instances of doctrine fetishism. The realities of the Indian situation cannot, with all the stretching, be related to the metaphysics of tweedledum-tweeledee of the above sort. A foundation of doctrinal understanding is of course necessary before correct strategies can be laid down, but between the Scylla of lack of theology and the Charybdis of footnotes or minutiae, there ought to be a sensible middle course. The dispute, after all, ought not to be so acute as it was when the CPI came apart in 1964—nor is it one involving immediate strategy. Despite their alternative thesis, the Andhra deviationists in the CPI(M) are not altogether overt in regard to their proposals for an alternative programme of action. Even the Naxalbari group in West Bengal, notwithstanding their doctrinal faith in instant peasant revolution, are taciturn about how this is going to be brought about *today*: boycotting the elections—which they advocate—is not by itself much of a programme of action. It is a programme of non-action, and should be followed, or accompanied, by something else.

This is where we stumble. Similarly, once the cussedness of the Soviet leaders is agreed upon, whether China should or should not have cooperated with the USSR for sorting out aid to the Vietnamese, does not happen to be terribly relevant for deciding what should be done in India now—or even for deciding what the Indian party comrades, on their own, could do for Vietnam. Nothing is gained—and the

movement of the masses is put years and decades behind—by the split in what was, till the formation of the united fronts, the only radical party of the Left in the country, on such remote issues.

Is it all on account of excessive reading of the assorted versions of the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union—so replete with purges and liquidations—or is it the peculiarity of the Hindu mind—dissecting and discovering of manna in nyaya, *sankhya* and *mimansa*—which is at work in these intra-party invectives? Or is it simply the reflection of typical middle-class mentality? The top leadership—as well as the leading cadres—of the Communist Party, never mind the particular hue, continues to spring from respectable middle-class roots. With the reality of power far, far away, it is the simulation of power which often attracts the petty bourgeois mind. What the leadership and the rebels of the CPI(M) are currently indulging in may not necessarily reflect the inevitability of the historical process, it may merely underline the hazards a Communist Party has to run through when it is moulded and guided by the bourgeoisie. Meanwhile, cry the beloved country.

Bihar's Turn

Before the President took over, the politicians in Bihar, the leader who resigned as well as the ones waiting in the wings, made the all-too-familiar gesture of being ready to form another stable ministry (stable has another meaning); and after the dictat from New Delhi, came the familiar statements from almost all quarters about how happy they were at the new dispensation. The pattern has become so common that not many people in other States bother to follow what is happening next-door, the feeling being—we have been here before.

Bihar has set a record, not unique though. In the last 15 months three ministries have tried to function and there have been 85 defections from among the legislators, some changing their loyalties thrice. This indeed is

parliamentary democracy, Indian-style. In the meantime, none of the pressing problems are anywhere near solution. True, the first United Front Ministry was able to avert famine in the wake of the severe drought, with the co-operation of outside agencies. But its failure particularly over land reform and the communal question was dismal. Frequent riots pockmarked a not-too-handsome face. Jana Sangh elements acquired confidence and strengthened their grip over many branches of administration, and Bihar is yet to pay the full price. The coming months will not be free of tension, because the politics of language and communalism pays. Meanwhile some people will be able to snore in peace now that the threatened enquiries into corruption will be slowed down.

That the Congress strategy and tactics of toppling non-Congress governments is succeeding so well will make some other States uneasy. While damning the Congress, it is little use commiserating with the fallen. The hodge-podge combination of contrary interests deserved what they got. Would they learn any lesson? It seems they will go in, not for a vigorous programme, but for more shady compromises in the name of unity.

How expensive it all is! In Bihar Ministers are entitled to a car purchase advance of Rs. 20,000, to be deducted in monthly instalments of Rs 400. But with the ridiculous mortality of their tenure, most Ministers cannot pay up in full. Lakhs of rupees remain unpaid and the cars are not returned. Elections too, are expensive, though Mr Morarji Desai does not seem to mind them when Congress prospects are bright.

The Adivasis

For the last one month or so some areas of Bihar have been scenes of demonstrations by Adivasi people and police violence against them. The tribals demand employment and an end to exploitation and discrimination. Predictably, reactionary political parties and the big business Press have raised a cry about diabolical schemes by fo-

reign devils in an area of strategic importance. In order to lend colour to the conspiracy story, some fertile brains in a news agency put out reports that a group of Communists have been sent to Peking for "high-level consultations". The alleged leader of this Peking-bound team recently issued a statement describing the story as mischievous as well as ridiculous.

The pathological reaction of the 'nationalist' Press apart, the plight of the Adivasi people makes one wonder why they have been so quiet and reconciled to their sub-human existence. For, in spite of their valiant fight in the past against the white rulers, they find that they are still being robbed as before by the mahajans and sahu-kars. The huge tracts of land they recovered from nature no longer belong to them. They live on their own soil by the mercy of the landlords. Compensation for the lands they offered to the railways and various industries dried up somewhere on the pipeline and never reached them. Neither were they given employment at the plants that grew up on their soil. The Adivasi youth who dares to join college or university is often subjected to harassment by the new rulers whose colour is not very different from his. Add to this the repression by the petty tyrants of the Forest Department who do not seem to discriminate between the tribals and other creatures of the jungle. No wonder that the tribals are now marching in their hundreds demanding a separate State. One of their spokesmen said, "We do not ask anybody to grant it as Jaipal Singh or S. K. Bage or other leaders asked in the past. The begging bowl has been thrown away. We have no faith in the ballot box". Others shout "Larke lenge teer ke bal par." If all this sounds subversive the Government has only itself to blame.

So long crafty politicians both in and outside the Adivasi camp found among these rebellions wretched of the earth a useful lever to attain their petty political ends. Political carpet-baggers like Mr. Jaipal Singh who claimed to represent the Adivasis were lured into the Congress. They dissolved the Jharkhand Party with the plea of fighting for the Adivasi cause

from within. The other Adivasi leader, Mr S. K. Bage, also vowed to fight for their cause on his accession to the ministerial gaddi. Despite their record of betrayal, these jobless leaders are again trying to sneak back into the Adivasi movement. Once again one hears Jaipal Singh's strident voice demanding Jharkhand State—of course by strictly constitutional means. Other reactionary forces like the Jana Sangh have not been sitting idle. By fanning up anti-Christian sentiments and

View from Delhi

Nagas, Moscow And Peking

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

FIVE years of Emergency has imposed on us a moron-like conformism which is reflected best in the straitjacketed reporting from New Delhi. Though the DIR which held the country together for five years has been replaced by that caboodle called the National Integration Council, the reflexes of the hand-out-fed tigers and cubs have been uniformly Pavlov-like. For instance, when Mr Arshad Hussain was appointed his country's Foreign Minister (the announcement came in the wake of Mr Kosygin's Rawalpindi visit), our Press was psyched into shouting to the world that Pakistan's new Foreign Minister owed his job to the Soviet Prime Minister's solicitude for India. The other day, when Mr Arshad Hussain's first policy speech turned out to be belligerent in New Delhi's view, the Press was called for a solid debriefing to get what the Foreign Office wanted across.

Another recent instance was the Naga clash of June 6. There is a yawning credibility gap in the official version. There are many other versions to it. But when no questions are asked, only lies will be told by the official spokesmen. A Naga training camp had existed right under the nose of the army for years. But when the army patrols stumbled on it, it was

launching a 'suddhikaran' crusade they are trying to divert the movement to communal lines.

It is time the Adivasi people knew who their real leaders are and forged a broad-based alliance with other oppressed people. A separate State will certainly give them better employment opportunities, but will it ensure that the agencies of exploitation will no longer be there? The problem of poverty or exploitation is not coterminous with the boundaries of a State.

too much for the army's pride. If one knows anything about guerilla warfare, the army regular has always been taught to have contempt for the irregular guerilla. When the irregular gets the better of the regular, it is like having to swallow something from out of the deep freeze. So the camp was smoked out, though the casualties on the Government side were decidedly heavy. If the skirmish ended in a great victory for the security forces the Government version could have been couched in more credible language.

The Emergency laws have prevented a fair and full reporting of what has been happening in Nagaland. Even to this day, our knowledge of the happenings is precious little and whatever news reaches the Press is the result of efficient management by the Government.

Was the June clash the beginning of a new Naga uprising or was it the first shot of a massive operation to find a military solution of the Naga problem? For, back in April, it was known that the Government was claiming to possess evidence of a plot for a joint Naga-Mizo-Kachin uprising slated for June with Sino-Pak support. Alongside, the insurrectionists were alleged to be saying in their circulars that the Government was

planning a military clean-up after the monsoon and to forestall the offensive the insurrection should begin in June. (Vide *View from Delhi* in the April 14 issue). All this is part of the Government brief circulated to top officials after the visit to Nagaland of a team of secretaries.

When the hair-raising "Subversion Plot" story was put out, the Marxist Communists, China and Pakistan were part of the story. But surprisingly there has been no mention of the Marxists or Pakistan since. The CPI(M) has already begun expelling its ultras to head off a ban and the Government is in no need of an alibi for banning the party now. The conscious efforts to play down the alleged Pakistani hand must have its own logic. A protest note to China was handed over to the Charge d'Affaires here rather flamboyantly.

It is quite possible that a section of the Naga underground, in its desperation, turned to the Chinese for arms. But what New Delhi has always refused to understand is that its premium on a military solution to the problem would drive more and more Naga sections to seek foreign arms. If not from China, it would come from somewhere else. But to reduce the whole issue to a question of foreign arms would be political imbecility. The tribal unrest in North-Eastern India is part of an ethnic revolt covering parts of Burma and Thailand in a strategic 1,000-mile stretch connecting the Thai borders with the Himalayan reaches. The U.S. State Department has its own assessment of the problem. There is a marked anxiety on the part of both the United States and the Soviet Union to bolster the Ne Win government in Burma with military aid. Gen. Ne Win's last visit to New Delhi resulted in a broad accord on handling the Naga problem and this accord has implications relevant to the Super-Power game of "containing China". If the U.S. presence in Vietnam means containing China, its presence elsewhere, say in the area of these ethnic revolts, should be equally welcome to those who believe in the containment theory. The Soviet Union might mean it when it

wants an end to the Vietnam war but it certainly cannot have any rational objection to the U.S. military presence in the strategic trijunction to ensure stability on the Indian sub-continent. The U.S. has to be militarily present somewhere north of Thailand to put through its plan to contain China.

The State Department's assessment of the ethnic revolts seems to be undergoing a drastic change in the light of the new upsurge in the area. It has begun to look beyond where the arms come from. It sees in the upsurge (expected though) immense possibilities to achieve certain strategic ends. As a result, India and Burma would come under heavy pressure to clean up all the border insurrections. In Thailand, the U.S. is the master.

It should not be difficult to convince New Delhi (with so many die-hards in the Cabinet) that liquidation of the Naga insurrection would be part of fighting Chinese expansionism. Already there are reports current here that a section of the army leadership thinks that the Government should take an "up or down" decision on wiping out the Naga guerillas while the Government would do well to find a settlement on the demands of the Mizos, Kukis and others who have entered the picture rather late. It would hardly be surprising if Mr Morarji Desai and some others force a decision that would throw the Government into a framework of action that would suit the U.S. strategy. The Chinese arms issue is being magnified out of all proportion.

As for New Delhi's sudden decision not to play up the alleged Pakistani role, it could well be that there is a realisation that the ethnic minorities on the border cannot be held in control once any revolt in East Pakistan succeeds. It is in the Hindu-oriented Government's interest that Rawalpindi should have a firm grip over East Pakistan and not let it break away. Even if Pakistan helps the Mizos or the Nagas now, New Delhi would never support any secessionist movement in East Pakistan though it might support one in Pakhtoonistan.

Sofia Junket

With the volume of Indo-Soviet rupee trade bloating, Moscow-lining Communism offers more fringe benefits to the old faithfuls than ever before. But these benefits cannot for long remain the monopoly of the *sarkari* Communists of the CP. The unseemly wrangle over who should represent India at the Sofia Youth Festival is proof that the *sarkari* Communists are not reconciled yet to sharing the largesse with the representatives of the great progressive national bourgeoisie. The sponsors of the festival, which for all purposes mean the Soviet Government, have sent invitations to the All-India Youth Federation, a front organisation of professional youth leaders of the CPI, and to the Youth Congress. Both of them have set up their own preparatory committees and for those determined to make it to Sofia (beyond Tashkent, the Fatherland takes care of you, overland) it is a desperate gamble. The Youth Federation has Moscow's patronage and the Youth Congress the Government's. The subsidy comes from Moscow but the Government can withhold the P Form. But Mrs Indira Gandhi chose to bless the Communist outfit by inaugurating their pre-Sofia mela in New Delhi and making a vague appeal for sending a representative delegation. The Youth Congress has been lobbying with the Ministers and officials to prevent the rival preparatory committee from sending its own delegation. The contradiction between the CPI and the Congress is a non-antagonistic one, the dialecticians say. So a compromise might yet be formed. But what about the third organisation that has popped in suddenly? The Bharat Yuvak Samaj also claims to have received an invitation. The Samaj is not terribly keen on participation in the festival. "We want to stop the existing committees from going," its spokesman told us. But what we liked most was the desperately patriotic tone of the invitation to the Samaj's Press Conference: "I hope you will save the country in this critical time." Some national crisis, indeed.

Calcutta Diary

CHARAN GUPTA

TO begin with a confession. We have sort of a vested interest in what has come to be known in recent months as the Promode Das Gupta formula: we were the first to suggest it. The formula had its genesis in these columns, way back in April 1967—when the United Front Government was barely a month old—; as our readers will know, these columns were then carried elsewhere. Even as early as then, we had anticipated the type of difficulties which subsequently did beset the United Front regime, and finally led to its overthrow (“The conspirators in New Delhi would visualise West Bengal in the image of their own neighbourhood: if loyalties can come unstuck in Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab, they ought to come unstuck in West Bengal too.”) The pretty thin majority which the United Front had in the West Bengal Assembly, we had argued, would be a constant source of temptation to the Congress—and the Centre, which would try to be nasty to the United Front on each little issue concerning Centre-State relations. To put the Centre in its place, we had further suggested, the Front should demand a fresh poll in the State. If the parties constituting the Front agreed to present a single list of candidates for all the 280 constituencies in such a poll, in the then prevailing climate, the Congress would have been decimated; and the Centre would also have been told off in the clearest possible terms that in trying to tangle with the United Front, it was taking on almost the entire population of West Bengal.

In our innocence, we then proceeded to compose a provisional list of UF candidates in case a mid-term poll were to be forced in the State. In making the list, a straightforward principle was followed: whichever party constituting the Front had secured the highest vote against the Congress in a particular constituency in the 1967 general elections, earned

the right to nominate the United Front candidate in that constituency. We accordingly made the party-wise allocation of the 280 constituencies. This, we submit, was the beginning of what later became famous as the Promode Das Gupta formula.

* * *

Nobody listened to us. There was too much euphoria in the air. For some, a-bird-in-hand-is-worth-two-in-the-bush was the dominant emotion. For others, it was plainly the fear of being swamped by the CPI(M) in the event of a fresh election. Our suggestion of a fresh poll, and our allocation of seats between the UF constituents, were treated with the contempt which was then deemed appropriate.

The subsequent history perhaps vindicated us, but it is little use rubbing that in. The political situation has meanwhile changed a great deal: the charisma is gone from the United Front, some of the rats are departed, Mr Ajoy Mukherjee has been found out to be the hoax that he must always have been, even the CPI(M) has entered a most difficult period following the alarums of Naxalbari and the expulsions in successive waves. At a certain stage, our formula was discovered by Mr Promode Das Gupta, who suggested it for consideration by the UF colleagues. Almost every other party within the Front was against: at least they all went on record that they were aghast. From the cacophony that emitted, it seemed that each of the other parties in the Front has enjoyed an accretion of strength in the course of the last one year and a half, and it is only the Left Communists who have gone down. Notwithstanding Naxalbari, this was sheer nonsense. It was also extraordinary how arguments were mounted that since the Naxalbari elements have gained in influence in recent months, to that extent the official CPI(M) stands diminished, and since the votaries of Naxalbari do not believe in elections,

a sizable number of the constituencies which, on the basis of the Das Gupta (sic) formula, should have gone to the Left Communists, should now be apportioned to the other parties. We hold no brief for the CPI(M), but the utter lack of moral principle which some of these careerists and opportunists in the United Front have exhibited still deserves to be brought in the open.

Before the Ides of Krishnagar, none but the Left Communists was for the formula. After Krishnagar, discretion has been adjudged the better part of blackmail. Last week, the United Front was able to release a roster of party-wise allocation of seats for the mid-term elections covering as many as 274 constituencies. It is only for six constituencies—Jalangi and Lalgola (Murshidabad), Kaliaganj (Nadia), Galsi (Burdwan), Jorasanko (Calcutta) and Bolpur (Burdwan)—that announcements are yet to be made. Jalangi and Lalgola are presumably being kept warm for the nominees of Mr Kazem Ali Mirza, who has defected from the Congress; Kaliaganj is being offered to another defector from the Congress; none of the parties in the Front had put up a candidate for Jorasanko in the 1967 election; the claims for Galsi and Bolpur are still being fought by different parties within the Front. Of the 274 constituencies, nine have been kept apart for the Praja-Socialist Party, which formally walked out some time ago. The Lok Sevak Sangh of Purulia too is no longer a constituent of the Front, but it has apparently agreed to go along with the Front—and with the announced allocations.

The Formula has prevailed to an extent which would have been considered highly unlikely even a couple of months ago. It is extraordinary that with all the fumings and the threats, the public polemics and closed-door huddles, the pettifogging and horse-trading have amounted to disturbing the Formula in the case of only ten constituencies: one should really be shocked at the utter lack of any sense of proportion on the part of the revolutionary gentlemen. Cossipore (Cal-

cutta), and Panchla (Howrah) should, according to the Formula, have gone to the Left Communists; they have now been conceded to the Forward Bloc. The Left Communists have given away Pursura (Hooghly) and Berhampore (Murshidabad) to the Right Communists, and Chowringhee (Calcutta) to the SSP. The Bangla Congress has agreed to concede Garden Reach (24-Parganas) and Garbeta (Midnapore) to the Right Communists, Onda (Bankura) to the Forward Bloc, and Mathurapur (24-Parganas) to the Socialist Unity Centre. Finally, the Marxist Forward Bloc has condescended to give away Sealdah (Calcutta) to the RSP. One should add that, of the six constituencies which have not yet been allotted and some of which are being dangled before Congress defectors, Jalangi should have been contested by the CPI(M) according to the Formula, Lalgola by the RSP, and Kaliaganj by the Bangla Congress.

Contrary to the general impression, it is not the very small parties who have proved the most intransigent. They have of course made the usual noises, but by and large they have been unable to drive any hard bargain: a small party like the Marxist Forward Bloc in fact has sacrificed exactly one-third of its aggregate "due" claims by conceding Sealdah. It is the two middle parties—the Right CP and the Forward Bloc—who have been the toughest in the intra-mural negotiations: for them, the process of bargaining has been only "take" and no "give". The Right Communists have not conceded a single constituency, and have wrested four which should really have gone to the other parties, as per the Formula; the Forward Bloc too has surrendered no constituency, and has "won" three from the others. Not quite satisfied, the Right Communists are now demanding Bolpur, and the Forward Bloc has laid a claim for Galsi.

The Socialist Unity Centre deserves some sympathy. After the incarnations it has gone through during the last nine months, the residual political influence of the Bangla Congress is

very much suspect. For all one knows, outside Midnapore, by now it may indeed have attained an invisible infructuous quality. Yet, by the logic of the Formula and the necessity of the United Front to borrow the copyright of Mr Ajoy Mukherjee's name, it has been able to walk away with as many as 47 constituencies. This would lend the impression that it is the third biggest political force in the State, which it scarcely is. For example, in 24-Parganas, after the jotedar elements walked out of the Bangla Congress, the party is worth precisely nothing. In contrast, the Socialist Unity Centre, for all its crankiness, has a certain mass base in one or two areas in the district: the constituency of Canning should have been awarded to it. Minimal justice demands that, as recompense, it should be allowed to contest from the Bolpur constituency.

But there it is: the higgledy-hoggedy of the market place, the chauvinism of petty-bourgeois minds, the peculiarly Bengali genius to plot and scheme and fume and rage over trivialities. And these are the same people who, in their spare time, would mount the rostrum on the Maidan and call for the supremest sacrifice for the sake of the Revolution. In one sense, the devotees of Naxalbari are absolutely right: there is a degrading quality in this business of elections, the ultimate objectives get lost behind the curtain of wheelings and dealings, it reduces you to running for the favour of even unprincipled turncoats from the Congress. The United Front's affection for the PSP is indeed touching. The Praja Socialists have spurned the Front, their spokesmen have gone on record demanding the banning of both the Communist parties. But the arithmetic of elections brings forth an effulgence of the Vaishnava spirit: whatever the rebuff, the Front will continue with its unilateral a-wooing.

Let me make the transition from the first person plural to the first person singular. My first reaction after having a look at the UF was to make a quick mental calculation of the

roster of political defectors. Even assuming that the United Front is able to chalk up a comfortable majority in the mid-term election, any day, any week a certain number of people would walk out of the Front and join the Congress in order to save the country from "the totalitarian menace": in this category must be included the entire membership of the Bangla Congress and the PSP, some elements from the SSP, and a few of the unattached Independents. After this realisation, what fulfilment?

And yet this is where my assessment diverges sharply from the point of view of the dissidents in the CPI (M)-I. I have no doubt at all that it would be a terrible thing if the Congress wins the mid-term poll. By all means let all illusions be dispelled about what is or is not achievable through parliamentary elections, by all means let there be an exposure of the series of anti-people measures that were perpetrated during the eight months of the United Front's occupation of Writers' Building. But a return of the Congress should still not be contemplated lightly. If Mr Atulya Ghosh succeeds in recapturing power in West Bengal, there would be no question of the fire next time—this would be the next time. On the theoretical plane, one could argue that the repression that would be let loose would be like the fire that purifies; consequently, the revolution would be brought one step nearer. However, Bengalis are as Bengalis do, and my respect for the Bengali spirit of survival cannot be stretched very far. As external circumstances alter, the heroics in this hinterland often turn into mock heroics, just as the Marxist intellectuals of yester year are found today to flock under the canopy of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and some of them have the cheek to assert that they continue to hold steadfast to their Marxist beliefs.

Call it my pessimism, call it my cynicism, I therefore still see no alternative to thwarting the Congress even in the short period. Despite my derision, come November (which, with a little assist from the United Front constituents, could now well be Feb-

ruary), I would perhaps still be found dragging myself to the booth and voting for the United Front candidate. There will be a wrench in my heart if I discover that the candidate in question would more likely than not sup with one or all of the famous West Bengal

Ghoshes the night of the election itself, or is a votary of peaceful co-existence with Mr Johnson or Mrs Gandhi, but the alternative is much more fearsome. At least, this is my view as of today, I am willing to be persuaded otherwise.

peasants who would supply agricultural produce at their whim.

"New Agricultural Policy"

AMIT BHADURI

FROM the time of Indian independence to the period of the formulation of the Third Plan, both the Indian Government and our economic planners used to emphasise strongly the objective of "self-sustained growth" largely through the creation of a domestic capital base. One can even say that this particular strategy characterised the Second Five Year Plan in India. It was hoped that such a path of development would gradually enable us to rely less heavily on foreign countries, as we should be producing most of our industrial raw materials and machinery to cut down our import bill.

This focus in Indian planning has dramatically changed in recent years. From what one gathers from official journals and various pronouncements of politicians in the ruling party at the Centre, we are going in for a different strategy of economic development primarily based on agriculture. We are being told that this new policy of agricultural development will go a long way towards stepping up the process of income-generation in the country.

The historical background to this change in emphasis from industry-based development to greater emphasis on agriculture is well known. Two recent years of bad harvest and continuous dependence on the import of foodgrains (especially American wheat under PL480) to keep the public distribution system going in urban areas account for this recognition of the importance of agriculture in the Indian context. Indeed not many people would disagree with the crucial importance of stepping up agricultural pro-

duction in the country. The disagreement starts at the next step of argument regarding the *method* to be followed for increasing agricultural production.

The Government's new agricultural policy in theory is to rely on the so-called "progressive" farmers to introduce various new inputs like fertilizer, better seeds, etc. for increasing production per acre. Further, the policy will concentrate only on the "sure-irrigation" areas in some selected regions. But in practice, the so-called "progressive" farmers are also *rich* farmers and the new agricultural policy would entail a more complete dependence on the richer peasantry, which forms about the top 5% — 10% of Indian peasantry. Through the use of better seeds, fertilizers and irrigation water these handful of Indian farmers are likely to gain, making the distribution of income in rural areas still worse than what it is today. This policy of relying on rich peasants would have made a good deal of sense if agricultural income-tax could be imposed on those people who would gain as a result of the new agricultural policy, but all recent discussions on the subject show that the Government is not inclined to follow such a policy of taxation along with its new agricultural policy. As a consequence, for raising surplus from agriculture to link up with industrial development (so that people employed in industry are supported by agricultural surplus and raw materials of agriculture for industry, the Government will be left to the mercy of a small section of rich

Two Effects

The new agricultural policy can therefore be expected to have two important effects. The first one is economic and the second one political. Economically, our industrial plan will be guided considerably by the amount of agricultural surplus that rich peasants decide to make available in exchange of industrial consumption goods. At the worst, this will not enable us to have enough agricultural surplus for a sufficiently high rate of industrial development; at best, enough agricultural surplus will be raised in exchange of industrial consumption-goods; but this will have the undesirable consequence of giving the composition of industries a bias towards consumer goods, thus rejecting our original plan of building up rapidly a capital base in the country. Further, to produce the "new inputs" for agriculture a good deal of our industrial resources must be devoted to agriculture. In short, our industrial development must dance to the tune of not only our agricultural performance, but also at the will of the rich peasants.

Politics very often is nothing but concentrated economics. The political consequence of such an economic policy regarding agriculture is also clear. The rich peasants will emerge as possibly the most dominant pressure group in Indian politics in the near future. Already through the mechanism of rural credit (by which many poorer peasants are in perpetual indebtedness to the richer peasants, many of whom are also local money-lenders) and local self-government, the richer peasants exert important control on the poorer sections. In many cases, one would suspect that they are the key figures for controlling rural votes, and in this light, the new agricultural policy has the distinct political advantage of getting these influential peasants on the side of the ruling party.

What is the implication, in terms of economic growth, of such a policy? Our industrial policy will be geared to our agricultural performance. More

than that, the Government will have little control over agricultural surplus in the absence of agricultural taxes. And if it tries to raise agricultural surplus in exchange of industrial consumption goods, the composition of industries will be affected, favouring a consumption oriented industrial development. In either case, industrialization, which was expected to give the country a suitable capital base of machinery production, will suffer. For industrial development we shall have to rely heavily on foreign aid and loans, gradually giving up the idea of self-reliance in the foreseeable future. What is more pathetic, in all probability even foodgrains will continue to be imported to keep the public distribution system going. For, if we cannot

tax away part of the agricultural production or do not manage to raise it in exchange of industrial consumption goods, the only way to keep our urban population (who are also vocal in politics) reasonably happy is through imported food distributed at controlled prices. The Government may thus hope to ride two horses at the same time—keeping the urban groups satisfied through imported wheat and the influential rich section of the peasantry satisfied through its new agricultural policy. At this level the economy can continue to function for some time to come. But for that, we shall have to pay a very high price—we shall be forced to drop our long cherished ambition of a 'self-reliant' economy.

The Vanguard—1

DAVID GODDARD

IT is a commonplace that the locus of revolution has shifted in the past 20 years from the advanced capitalist countries of Europe and North America to the so-called Third World. Classical Marxist analysis has been shown to be in error insofar as a socialist revolution has never taken place, according to orthodox prescription, in a society at an advanced stage of capitalist development where the productive forces have reached a point of integration at the national level. The proletariat of Western countries (with the sole exception of some sections of American blacks) is, in fact, least likely at the present stage of history to develop a revolutionary capability. The majority have been co-opted onto the capitalist system "gaily sharing in the feast"¹ of capitalist neo-colonial exploitation of the under-developed world. It has simply not been the case, with the development of capitalism to a high stage of monopoly organization, that the working class of the West has polarized and unified around a revolutionary leadership aimed at overthrowing an oppressive regime.

The reasons for this are complex,

and have almost as much to do with superstructural factors as changes in productive apparatus and organization, i.e. in the economic base of capitalism. In regard to the latter, despite the long-run instability of the system, it seems that no major contradictions have been generated between the forces of production and productive relations in the last 30 years that would seriously threaten the existence of capitalism. However, it needs to be emphasized that other contradictions exist, although they have not reached crisis dimensions. They exist in the form of enormous expenditure on military hardware which the system is too heavily dependent on at the present time, but which in the long run (and possibly the short) endangers its existence, and in the dependence on foreign investment in countries which can no longer be described as "safe political climates" for investment. Nonetheless, internal to capitalist economies, monopoly organization with massive government intervention and support at all levels (not only fiscal and monetary operations on the economy, but intervention in the pro-

ductive and distributive organization as well) has managed to contain the advancement of productive forces. The giant international corporations have achieved a scale of organization sufficient at least for some time to come to cope with a rapidly expanding productive apparatus: indeed, in some industries they have managed to slow down the rate of socialization of productive forces.

But government support at both national and international levels has probably been the deciding factor. In some European countries, national governments directly control up to 40% of gross national product, a major element of security for corporate capitalism in countries such as Britain and France (not only in key primary industries and service facilities either). Where the development of productive forces is, in fact, beyond the grasp of most corporations, as for example in the European aircraft industry, capitalist governments are capable of taking over and running them. The degree to which capitalist countries have entered into large-scale quasi-rational economic planning of their internal economies cannot be overestimated by Marxists. It can be expected that the incidence of nationalization of industries, at least in European countries, will increase even more rapidly in the next decade or so. This will occur not only in industries where the rate of technological advance outstrips the existing possibilities of productive organization, but also in industries essential to military security, as well as in declining industries. The State will become the chief monopolist in a monopoly system. But 60% nationalization is qualitatively different from complete socialization, which means that there is no development towards socialism through simple State takeovers in bourgeois capitalist societies.

Factors for Stability

Similarly, on the international level, national governments have intervened extensively, especially since 1945, to safeguard the basic interests of the world capitalist system. Tariff and trade agreements have been conclud-

ed, mechanisms to ensure an adequate flow of international liquidity for trade and investment purposes have been established, protective areas such as the British Commonwealth, the European Economic Community, have been built, and all the while trade, aid, diplomatic, and military forces are deployed around the non-socialist world to make that world "safe for democracy" and increase monopoly profits. While, in the long run the viability of capitalism cannot depend on government intervention of the type described, because in the long run capitalism is not viable, the measures taken particularly since 1945 and with the benefit of Keynesian economic "rationality", have nevertheless been significant in their stabilizing effect on the capitalist system as a whole. There is no question, for instance, that the European economy has been rebuilt.

A second major factor has been the overall rationalization of the world capitalist system and its unification. Capitalist Powers can no longer be expected to fight among themselves as they did in the past. Partly this is the result of the total dominance of world capitalism by one super-Power, the United States, since 1945. The United States, in effect, presided over a death struggle between the original imperialist Powers, stepping in at the exact moment when the protagonists had so weakened themselves and each other that they were no longer capable of emerging as outright victors or of achieving their former levels of capitalist domination. The rebuilding of the West German and Japanese economies as bulwarks against the threat of socialism, and as outposts of a new imperialism, merely confirmed who was the victor of 1945. At almost no cost to American capitalism, the major capitalist Powers passed into a relation of total and irremedial dependence on the United States. The net result has been greater rationalization of world capitalism through increased centralization and control. Capitalism has, then, moved beyond the stage of warfare between imperialist Powers to a stage of relatively harmonious co-existence and "peaceful competition"

through recognition of common class interests. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the European Economic Community which represents a last-ditch attempt by a dying and U.S.-dominated capitalist system to preserve the appearance of technological, economic, and political independence.

Secondly, recognition of common class interests leading to a new awareness of the need for greater unification has been forced on world capitalism as a defensive strategy against socialism. The capitalist Powers have had to unite in the face of a class enemy infinitely more powerful than a national proletariat. Prior to 1945 there was only one socialist country, the Soviet Union, which was forced through the threat of invasion to take part in a capitalist war at tremendous human and material cost to itself (as indeed was the rest of the world under imperialist domination). At present there are 12 socialist countries in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America, as well as a number of non-revolutionary countries (such as the Arab nations), who are attempting to reject U.S. imperialism. The imperialist Powers can no longer, as they formerly did, divide up the world between themselves. One third of the world's population is now socialist, and the capitalist countries led by the United States have lost effective control over a billion people since 1941. Moreover, at least the revolutionary socialist countries (China, Vietnam, Korea, Cuba) are either directly or indirectly engaged in a war to the death with world capitalism.

The revolutionary struggle, originally considered by orthodox Marxists to be a phenomenon internal to particular capitalist systems, has been transformed into a worldwide struggle between an increasingly fascist and militaristic capitalist bloc of countries (despite a certain degree of bourgeois squeamishness in the European ranks²) and the peoples of the socialist world in solidarity with the exploited proletariat of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This struggle has been deepened by the ignominious but prudent flight since 1945 of the original imperialist Powers from direct administrative do-

mination of most of the underdeveloped countries. This strategic withdrawal took place as a result of the tremendous pressure exerted on the capitalist countries around the world by national liberation movements, and the total exhaustion of the imperialists by the European conflagration.

The Battleground

The battleground for revolution has, then, become the so-called Third World, the aspirations of colonized peoples awakened by national liberation movements and fired by the rapid success of many of them. But while the direct political grip of imperialism on the underdeveloped countries has been loosened, economic strangulation of these countries continues to underdevelop them further. Imperialism is no less brutal, but it has taken on new and more subtle forms. The theoretical understanding of this continued satellization of not only recently independent States, but also and especially the Latin American countries under total U.S. hegemony since the Spanish withdrawal, has been brilliantly provided by the work of Gunder Frank.³ Frank shows quite clearly that the continued economic satellization of the Third World by the metropolitan Powers systematically underdevelops the satellite countries so much that they are incapable of sustaining even a moderate internal capitalist expansion. His analysis proves decisively, in fact, that underdevelopment through satellization has the effect of creating revolutionary conditions in satellite countries because class polarization is increased through a high incidence of economic and political crises and instability. The general consequence for the working class has been that they are as poor, if not poorer, than they were under conditions of direct colonial rule. This is true especially for the rural population. Social consciousness of their continued degradation has been further sharpened in the case of the new States by the semblance of independence, freedom, and justice, which is continually paraded before them by their bourgeois military leaders, and the glaring contrast this presents with

the lack of economic and social progress (a progress which is impossible in conditions of neo-colonial exploitation). Precisely the same is true of Latin American peoples where any illusions of progress are dispelled by the increasing differential between a few rich and the mass of the poor.

There are, therefore, economic factors internal to the underdeveloped countries, as well as major historical factors in the development of capitalism and socialism in the last 20 years, which must necessarily predispose revolutionary theory in an entirely new direction. It is no longer possible to think revolutions only take place within the national territory of a society in an advanced stage of capitalism. Revolutionary experience to date shows quite the contrary. The Bolshevik Revolution occurred at an extremely low level of industrialization and when only 15% of the population was urbanized. Even though its support came from the advanced, urbanized and industrialized proletariat, about 3 million strong, the October Revolution cannot be considered as occurring at an advanced stage of capitalist development. Russia in 1917, in its industrial development, was in about the same position as Bolivia or Peru are today. And all subsequent socialist revolutions have occurred in countries well before the development of productive forces came into contradiction with productive relations.

However the orthodox Marxist thesis of class polarization with armed struggle breaking out when this process is sufficiently advanced, is still in essence correct, even if simplistic inasmuch as it does not take account of locally variable proletarian conditions. Nonetheless it may be suggested that the thesis of amiseration is perhaps only applicable in conditions of underdevelopment, precisely because the working classes (both rural and urban⁴) of the satellized countries are the true proletariat of which Marx wrote, namely, those who are in the lowest position in the chain of exploitative relationships reaching from the metropolitan centres of the capitalist system to its furthest reaches in the

oppressed and underdeveloped rural areas of the satellized countries.⁵ Moreover, in these circumstances of satellite control by the metropolis there can be absolutely no possibility of internally generated capitalist development. It is against the interests of the metropolis either to foster capitalist development directly or to permit the national bourgeoisie of the satellite in question to attain economic independence⁶.

Now it is a basic thesis of Marxist economics that capitalism is a system which will inherently develop to a higher stage of capital concentration, monopoly organization, tremendous proliferation of productive forces, and finally imperialist exploitation. And yet a large number of capitalist countries exist, particularly in Latin America, but also India and Malaysia among S. E. Asian countries, where such an expansion is precluded from the very beginning by the stranglehold exerted on capitalist development by the metropolitan capitalist countries. In other words, the existing capitalist development is crippled and distorted from the outset; a capitalist system exists except that it is paralyzed by forces external to it.⁷ So long as that stranglehold is maintained, there is no possibility for an internal capitalist expansion. What does this mean for the proletariat, whether rural or the rapidly increasing urban lumpen-proletariat? It means simply that as long as the economic system remains paralyzed by external control, the proletariat is caught in a continuing process of pauperization, with no possibility of amelioration of class conditions. Overall it will mean in the underdeveloped world that relatively and absolutely the working class will be materially worse off through time: first, the wealth that is internally generated enriches the bourgeoisie, and second, the rate of natural increase of the population is far higher than the rate of growth of per capita product. (In all Latin American countries in 1960-65, i.e. in Alliance for Progress years, the population increased at the rate of 3% per annum, while per capita product grew at the rate of only 1.5% per annum.) So in terms of the orthodox economic

interpretation, the objective situation of the proletariat as a whole is a truly revolutionary one. The proletariat of the underdeveloped world is then a part of the total capitalist system, and from the point of view of revolutionary theory, the most vital and potentially revolutionary part. In other words, with the development of imperialism to its highest stage in neo-colonialism, the task of socialist revolution has passed irrevocably from the hands of the Western working class into those of the oppressed peoples of the capitalist satellites. The Western proletariat has either missed its chance long ago, or never had one. The probability is that it will not get another until a sufficient number of key satellite peoples—most likely in Latin America and S.E. Asia—have achieved socialist victory.

Increasing Affluence

But for revolutionary theory to sketch the broad contours of revolutionary development is no longer adequate. The classic simplicity of 19th century Marxism, still adhered to by those who wrongly believe (and merely demonstrate their chauvinism and Western arrogance by doing so) that the future of the world revolution lies with the working class of the highly developed capitalist countries, is totally deficient in its conception of the social and economic conditions necessary if a working class is to become a seedbed for revolution. The history of the proletariat of Western Europe and North America since the 1900s is in great measure a history of bourgeoisification, a process which has gathered speed since 1945 with the increasing affluence of workers in advanced capitalist countries. Certainly Marx and Engels, and later Lenin, suspected this danger, but it never affected their faith in an eventual socialist revolution which would draw the mass of the working class into its train. Lenin in *What is to be done?* attacked the *economism* of the Russian trade unions at the end of the 19th century, but he could not have foreseen that it was to become the dominant attitude and mode of action of the working class against capitalist enterprise in the Western world. In the United States

this has culminated in a highly professionalized and bureaucratized business unionism which is as far removed from socialist principles as it is possible to imagine.*

*This article was received in March.
(To be concluded)

¹ F. Engels' letter to K. Kautsky, September 12, 1882, quoted in Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Selected Works I, P. 760.

² A squeamishness which is directly related to the European loss of empire and abdication of responsibility for the future of capitalism to the United States. In the last analysis of course, the Western countries, including France, are capable of being whipped into line out of recognition of their objective interests as capitalist countries. The Europeans think that they have solved the problem of history, which is a way of saying that they have lost control of it. They will not however escape it.

³ A. Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1967).

⁴ The rural population of underdeveloped countries are a genuine proletariat, or are rapidly being transformed into one. This is due both to the large-scale capitalization of agriculture, as well as the network of commodity market relations in which the peasants of the hinterlands are imprisoned. Isolated attempts at independent community development, conceived and executed by peasants themselves, have generally ended in disaster because of the impossibility of remaining independent from the capital and commodity markets. See, for example, the case of Muquiyauyu, a Peruvian Andes community, discussed in *Economic Development and Social Change*, ed. J. Meynaud (Paris: UNESCO, 1963).

⁵ An extremely graphic account of chronic capitalist stagnation in agriculture and its consequences for rural dwellers around the world is given by R. Dumont, a non-

Marxist agronomist, in *Lands Alive* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1965).

⁶ Active capitalist involution, i.e. internally generated expansion may occur in a satellite when economic ties with the metropolis are attenuated. A striking case of such active involution is that of Argentina, where the industrial basis of expansion was built up by British capital from the 1870's but wrested from British control with the weakening of British imperialist power.

⁷ The system cannot generate its own capital for investment because it is too weak (low domestic savings ratio), nor can it seek sufficient capital in the metropolis to generate a high rate of economic growth, because that is against the interests of the metropolis.

The Press

Traffic In Legislators

COMMENTATOR

FOR one reason or another the Congress leadership is convinced that public opinion in non-Congress States has swung in its favour. It appears to be determined to seize this opportunity to topple the remaining non-Congress Ministries, including the minority Ministry in Punjab which depends on Congress support for its existence. Congress leaders in the States have got busy, and traffic in legislators has begun on a large scale. The endeavour has already borne fruit in Bihar where the Chief Minister, Mr. Bhola Paswan Shastri, forestalled a Congress move to censure the Ministry with the help of defectors by submitting the resignation of his 96-day-old Cabinet. Mr Shastri suggested imposition of President's rule to be followed by a mid-term poll. This was not to the liking of the State Congress, and the leader of the Congress legislature party, Mr Mahesh Prasad Sinha, pressed his "right" to form a Ministry. Some weird happenings have been reported

from Madhya Pradesh which appears to be the next on the list of United Front Ministries to be toppled. The mysterious sojourn of the Chief Minister, Mr G. N. Singh, in New Delhi, his "courtesy" call on the Congress President, Mr Nijalingappa, who looks upon the Chief Minister, a defector from the Congress, as a "son", and his sudden departure from New Delhi without informing the leader of the UF, the Rajmata of Gawalior, all seem to corroborate reports that he is planning to return to the Congress. In Orissa a no-confidence motion against the Swatantra-Jana Congress coalition tabled by the Congress jointly with the Communist and Socialist groups has been defeated, but desperate efforts are being made to cause defections from the coalition. The unfinished task in Kerala is being vigorously pursued. Even in Madras where the Congress cannot hope to dislodge the Ministry in the near future, the party has decided to start an agitation demanding cheap rice to the people throughout the State. Simultaneously, an attempt is being made to drive a wedge between the DMK and the Communists in which the lead has been given by the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Morarji Desai.

The Indian Express, which sensed the imminent Congress manoeuvres before others, has warned the party that the game of defections does not pay ultimately. In an editorial before Mr Paswan's resignation it said that in the next few days it was just possible that the Congress would one way or another bring down the Ministries in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Punjab. Defections from the Swatantra-Jana Congress coalition in Orissa, leading to the downfall of the Ministry, were also likely. All this no doubt showed virility of a kind but the sheer opportunism of the toppling game was hardly likely to help the Congress in the long run. When the Congress was the main victim of floor-crossings, the leaders of the party were righteously indignant about defections; it was said that if defections became a permanent part of our political life they would bring democracy into disrepute and finally kill it. Later, in

Haryana, the Congress acted boldly in not giving tickets to the defectors who had returned to the party's fold. This principled stand was widely commended; and judging from the results of the Haryana poll it yielded good political dividends as well. But it looks as if the Congress has no intention of adopting a similar stand in other States.

None of the newspapers supported the move of the Bihar Congress leaders to form an alternative Ministry and all of them endorsed the suggestion of the outgoing Chief Minister for dissolution of the State Assembly and holding of a mid-term poll. *The Hindustan Times* was shocked that the Raja of Ramgarh should have been allowed so long to hold the State Administration to what amounts to ransom and was intrigued by the fact that the other 300 members of the State Assembly, not belonging to the Raja's group, should have failed to live up to their responsibility for collective public good. The inference is inescapable that the political leaders of Bihar have reduced themselves to a level where crumbs of office appear more important than public good. In this matter, the paper says, the record of the Congress opposition has been as discreditable as that of the United Front Government. If the latter sought an uninterrupted lease of life through softness to the Raja, the former gave the impression of banking on him for its return to power. Now that the Paswan Ministry has fallen, the Congress may again fall for the temptation of office the easy way. If the State leaders of the party cannot see the pitfalls of unscrupulous alliances to regain power, its Central leadership at least should know how to put them wise. Whatever the Congress does, the Raja of Ramgarh should be the last person to be considered for accommodation in any realignment of forces that the Congress may wish to bring about. From this point of view, as also in the long-term interest of the State, the outgoing Chief Minister's advice to the State Governor deserves commendation. The advice is sound for the politicians of Bihar have so

manifestly failed to live up to the trust reposed in them. The electorate should have a chance to have its say, after a spell of President's rule, which will give the State a much-needed respite from opportunist politicians.

"Sordid Drama"

Advising the Centre to take over Bihar *The Times of India* wrote last week that the resignation of the Paswan Ministry marked the end of one more act of the sordid drama that had been going on in Patna since the last general election. Born with an evil star, the second United Front Government was gripped by one crisis after another. For over ten days the Raja of Ramgarh played a bizarre, at times amusing, game of hide and seek with the Chief Minister. He declared one afternoon that his party had decided to withdraw its support to the Ministry and formally communicated the decision to the Governor. But by the evening he changed his mind and said that he was thinking of withdrawing his letter. A similar episode had occurred a week earlier. It will make the State's cup of misery full if the Congress were now to be asked to form a government again. The party is in total disarray and it can provide neither a stable nor an efficient administration. Any Ministry that it may form with the help of professional defectors is likely to be a shade worse than the Paswan Government. It is surprising that some State Congress leaders like Mr M. P. Sinha should still be entertaining hopes of getting back to power and offering such determined resistance to the idea of a mid-term poll. They fear, not without reason, that the party in its present state is in no position to face the electorate. But in a situation like this the Central Government cannot be guided purely by party interests. The interests of the State will be served far better if the Centre takes over its administration and holds a mid-term poll at a suitable time.

It would have been possible for *The Statesman* to praise Mr Paswan wholeheartedly for not surrendering to "pressures" had the resignation of the Ministry not been preceded by some

strange goings-on in Patna. Less than 18 hours before the Ministry was actually blown out, it was reported that the crisis threatening it had blown over. This was the result of a double somersault by the Raja of Ramgarh whose penchant for changing political colour would put to shame even a chameleon. The fact that the whole trouble started over proceedings which call into question some past dealings of the Raja of Ramgarh does no credit either to him or to those who invited him to join the Ministry in the first place. The paper, however, writing before the Presidential proclamation, wanted careful and sympathetic consideration to be given to Mr Paswan's recommendation for the dissolution of the Assembly to be followed by fresh elections notwithstanding the Congress party's demand for an opportunity for forming an alternative Government. The Bihar Congress, which is unable even to hold its organisational elections—when not stayed by a court of law, these have been obstructed by fist fights between rival factions—can hardly be expected to give the State a decent and stable government. It may well be that even a fresh poll may not give Bihar the much-needed political stability; the same men bent on their old mischief may well be back. But then the electorate would have had its chance.

Patriot says the Raja of Ramgarh, "who haunts Bihar's politics like a ghost who cannot be laid", exploited the situation created by the hesitation of other constituents of the United Front to accept Mr Paswan and his group without hesitation. This was Mr Paswan's undoing because whatever he might himself say or however many "points" be included in the United Front action programme, nobody in Bihar or outside was prepared to see the inclusion of the Raja and his brother in the Government as anything but opportunism. In his letter of resignation Mr Paswan mournfully admits that pressures were put on him to make him do things he could not do in the public interest, forgetting that he himself was mostly responsible for allowing such a situa-

tion to be created. His resignation once again shows that no Government can be stable in Bihar as long as the parties in the legislature continue to be what they are today. The Congress has ceased to be a political party. It can neither find an organisational head nor a Chief Minister even if the others permit it to get into office. The United Front if it cannot do without the help of the Jana Sangh and the Raja of Ramgarh should not claim office hereafter.

"Volte Face"

It seems it is now the turn of *Amrita Bazar Patrika* to have a seizure of rebellion. The paper is amazed at the Union Home Minister's *volte face* in writing to the Swatantra leader, Mr N. G. Ranga, that the mid-term election in West Bengal may be postponed to a later date if majority opinion in Parliament favours it. "Majority opinion" in Parliament will necessarily be on all fours with the opinion voiced by the Congress leaders of West Bengal. Will it be fair—not to speak of the constitutionality of it—to reopen a "conclusion" which was arrived at by the Chief Election Commissioner after discussion with all political parties and groups who will contest the elections? It is their opinion that should count. The paper has not spared the Swatantra party either. It thinks that Mr Ranga's argument that the election should be postponed because the law and order situation, though improved, had not yet stabilised is "insulting to this politically mature State". Police reports show that the law and order situation, far from improving, has deteriorated under President's rule. On other fronts there is complete stagnation. Despite good crops and falling prices elsewhere, rice prices in West Bengal are higher than what they were at about this time last year. Revival of popularly elected Government has become an urgent necessity. Finally, the paper cannot help asking why the Swatantra party which has no roots in West Bengal should bother about election date and seek to give the present ineffectual regime three months' extension.

Two One-Acters

RUDRAPRASAD SEN GUPTA

HAVING caused quite a sensation with *Kabi Kahini*, Satabdi (a late entrant in Bengali theatre) is now before us with a double bill, *Bagh* and *Vichitranusthan*, two one-acters, make a pleasant evening for the spectators who certainly get their money's worth during the performance.

Bagh, written by Badal Sarkar, is a short play about an irate young man who is fuming in impotent rage because of his failure to realize the meaning of existence. Decorating himself as a tiger with the help of etching blocks, the young man captures an ordinary woman and brings her into his den. The conversation that follows records the pangs and sufferings of these two young creatures for whom the sap of life has gone dry and life, with its multiple reflex actions, is a chronic source of irritation. Toward the close, we find them understanding each other a little and the play ends when the woman departs with a promise to visit the young man twice a week for teaching him mathematics.

This semi-surrealistic comedy is quite enjoyable for its intricate yet easily conceivable network of ironic dialogues and situations. Particularly the irony inherent in a serious play's ending in a 'boy meets girl' formula is cute. And the theatre-manship of Mr Sarkar is usually evident throughout the play. I won't call *Bagh* profound, yet to condemn it as shallow would be inaccurate.

Vichitranusthan, the second playlet of the evening, is jolly good fun at the expense of the innumerable organisers of variety performances who, in spite of their role of self-appointed social entertainers, are really ridiculous. With an unflinching eye Mr Sarkar, the playwright, has collected all the varieties, oddities and idiocies that are usually common in a variety show. The inventiveness of the author never ends and the power to produce gags never seems to run out.

There is not much of experimental

imaginativeness in the production of these one-acters. And I must hasten to add that there is no scope for experimentalism either. This, however, is not to suggest that the performances are ill-planned or sloppily executed. On the contrary. The director is meticulous in the handling of light, decor, make-up and choreography; the acting company, Himansu Chatterjee and Badal Sarkar in particular, has worked with discipline. The result is elegance, competence and slickness.

Book Review

THE THEATRE OF REVOLT

By Robert Brustein
Methuen. 30 sh.

ROBERT Brustein is a formidable name in the field of theatre criticism. Since his acceptance of the theatre critic's job in *New Republic* (along with professorship of dramatic literature at Columbia University), after the resignation of Eric Bentley following the Miller controversy, Mr Brustein has been as much a fervent champion of anything that is good in theatre as a relentless castigator of all the claptrap in Broadway. He is always consistent in the understanding of the mercenary motives of the Broadway magnates. That Edward Albee, despite his tremendous popularity, should be taken with a bucketful of salt, has been Mr Brustein's forthright view—a view that very few would dare utter. Above all, Mr Brustein is always lucid, illuminating and unambiguous in his expressions and opinions.

His aim in the fat, voluminous book *The Theatre of Revolt* is "to examine the development of a single consuming attitude or attitudes in eight modern playwrights; to analyse the work of these writers in depth; and to suggest an approach to modern drama as a whole". As an intention, this is not at all impertinent. But the author's ability is questionable. With ponderous footnotes and innumerable parentheses, he confuses us as well as himself. With a hairsplitting attitude,

the critic intends to prove that Ibsen, Strindberg, Pirandello, Shaw, O'Neill, Chekov, Artand and Genet are all revolutionary dramatists. How far these dramatists, so very disparate in almost every aspect, could be accepted as builders of the theatre of revolt, is questionable. How do Strindberg and Shaw sail together in the same boat? Indeed, over-simplification and uncontrolled imagination seem to have formed the basis of this book.

Of course, Mr Brustein has some good points. His contention that Strindberg must be saved from biographical fallacy is evidence of his objectivity. The first part of the chapter on Shaw, where the devil is given his due, is really truthful though his subsequent pleas for Shaw's greatness are at best pathetic. The survey of the volume of O'Neill criticism is discerning. Yet all this is only incidental. The book—price 30 shillings—is too much of a strain.

RUDRAPRASAD SEN GUPTA

THE BURGLAR

By Brigid Brophy

Jonathan Cape. 21 sh. 1968.

OUT of the 126 pages of this play, 56 are taken by the preface. The preface, in two parts, the author tells

us, is necessitated by the London critics' unchantable notices when the play was staged in 1967.

Playwrights and producers, it seems, are having quite some trouble with theatre critics these days. From Osborne to Tony Richardson the critics are being taken to task. Incidentally, Bernard Levin, as a critic, wrote quite an illuminating article recently on the duties of the artist which he says are only artistic and the artist needn't be involved in what people do to inflate his ego or pull his legs. However, Miss Brophy's purpose in the preface is less to arraign the critics than to explain the position in and around the society in which two classes of people are confronted on either side of a moral situation. As she herself puts it, "It is like two intersecting tunnel vaults. . . down one of which the lovers look at the burglar while down the other he looks at them."

The play starts as a burglar breaks into a house at night to discover its occupants in an adulterous relationship. Since he is apprehended as soon as he sneaks in, in sheer self-defence, he indulges in such a splendid display of self-pity that he makes his captor almost ashamed of having obstructed him in his vocation of burgling people. Then start the volleys—the burglar who is from the working class, accusing his captor, who is from the middle class and his ideas of middle-class property and propriety, and vice versa. Soon the burglar discovers that the couple which has been teaching him morals about other people's property is itself in an amoral position. Before he can wedge in his puritan mores, Edwina, the wife, hears footsteps. The lover and the burglar are both stuffed into the cupboard. Enters the husband, from a trip abroad, with his girl Charlotte. The wife doesn't act wronged, how could she? As the three are carrying on their adjustments amongst themselves, the burglar drops out of the cupboard. On recovering (it's his third faint of the evening) he adopts a purely puritanical attitude towards middle-class promiscuity.

Mis Brophy makes use of farcical elements—pushing lovers into cup-

boards, letting them swoon, and finally simplifying the complications by an over-dose of confusion. The four lovers form into a group against the burglar's preaching. As he had come into the house only for money, William the husband, in a slightly perverted Bishop-and-the-candlesticks mood with clean chit in case the policeman suspects the burglar, packs up for him a neat parcel of whatever valuables the house can offer. Seeing them so united, the burglar is suddenly defeated. When he is given the things he had come for, he realizes that they are playing some sort of a game the rules of which are not known to him. He goes away, sad. The lovers, in the permutations they had previously intended to be go away to different hotels. After a few minutes the burglar comes back, pricked by his conscience, one supposes, to throw back the objects of filth at the givers. As he is unlanding, he falls off the ladder.

I have given the detailed plot because the whole interest of the play centres on the situations the author has created in which sexual burglary is confronted with pure burglary. It is rather difficult to get at the moral point, though Miss Brophy in her preface is dead against prisons, saying they only help in perpetuating the crime. In the play, perhaps for the same reason, the burglar is not handed over to the police, though one hopes Miss Brophy is not suggesting that all victims of burglary are to be found in more or less the same ironic situation. Is she against burglary or middle-class promiscuity? Or, is it that since the burglar is from the lower middle class he is to be sacrificed at the whim of the money-wielding middle classes? Miss Brophy has, one is afraid, created situations according to her preface, though I would suggest that one reads the preface after the play.

RAJINDER PAUL



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Letters

Right To Arms

In your issue of June 15, you state that "The right to bear arms freely was guaranteed to Americans in their Constitution by their Founding Fathers". It would be as well to clarify this point since the National Rifle Association of America has misconstrued, to dangerous effect, the actual wording of the Constitution in much the same way. Article II of the Amendments to the Constitution reads:—

"A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed."

Thus, this referred, first, to an institutional right (in terms of the militia), and not to an individual right. Secondly, although the militia was composed of private citizens, the Supreme Court's rulings have repeatedly stressed that the Amendment refers to the collective rights of individuals forming a "well regulated Militia necessary to the security of a Free State." The issue was one of defining the relationship between the sovereignty of the individual States and the authority of the Federal Government. The law permits the bearing of arms without a licence, not the Constitution. This does give a different complexion to the possibility of gun control legislation.

SHAMA HABIBULLAH
Bombay

A Violent Society?

The picture of the American society drawn in your editorial columns of June 15 will horrify even the staunchest supporter of Democracy-American style, if he has any sense at all. To understand why such violence exists in American society, one should look into the established system there—that is inside the particular production relation and also inside the particular stage of that system of production. But alongside this dark portrait, we see occasional hopeful signs.

More and more Americans are opposing the brutal war in Vietnam. Progressive whites are joining hands with the oppressed Negroes to fight their common enemy. Also emerging is a section of people with a radical outlook.

So, one cannot say that the whole nation has indulged in crimes against Vietnam. How can one say that all the Americans have "perhaps come to enjoy not only the fictitious violence of crime films but also the scenes of actual killing, maiming and torture so systematically performed by their forces in Vietnam?" Is it not an example of hatred against a whole nation? You have perhaps mixed up the politics of a class with that of the whole nation.

SASANKA DUTTA
Calcutta

Robert Kennedy's murder appears to be a deep-rooted plot hatched by arch-conspirators. Without caring to look into the mystery of the motivation and organisation of the murder, most of the newspapers in this country almost simultaneously have dubbed the assassin as a pro-Communist, Nasserite and what not. But sober and impartial citizens strongly suspect that the crime is not so simple. Who can guarantee that the perpetrators of dastardly murder do not want to hoodwink world opinion by diverting attention from the real culprits to a mere puppet? There are reasons to believe that the murders of John and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King are interlinked and go back to almost the same dark source.

DEBAL KUMAR CHAKRAVARTI
Calcutta

Riots

Whether more people died in communal disturbances than through starvation in India since independence is a debatable matter. But there is no doubt that both took a heavy toll of lives. According to the estimate of Mr I. Akhtar about 50,000 lives were lost in the land of secularism. Although nature, which is responsible for drought and floods, has been

made a convenient scapegoat for starvation deaths, a suitable scapegoat for communal killings was not readily available to the people who assembled in Srinagar. But an attempt must be made to find out the root of communal disunity and hatred.

One must have noticed that when a quarrel develops between young boys, they never group themselves in terms of religion. But adults do it almost without fail. Why? Because they are taught, both in schools and at home, to hate and distrust people of other religions. And when they grow up, 'nationalist' newspapers substitute text books and serve to provoke communal feelings. Thus the ground for riots is prepared. And before one riot is quelled another flares up, increasing the death roll. As a matter of routine there are more speeches, more conferences and all that. Is it not the time for the leftists to dissociate from this routine pattern? What is wrong in calling a spade a spade? Instead of advising the people to be non-communal they should be asked, in a straightforward way, to shake off the burden of so-called religion. Distorted textbooks of history and culture should be burnt outright by the students. Teachers should refuse to teach what is wrong and perverse. Only a concerted and relentless movement in this direction can curb communalism.

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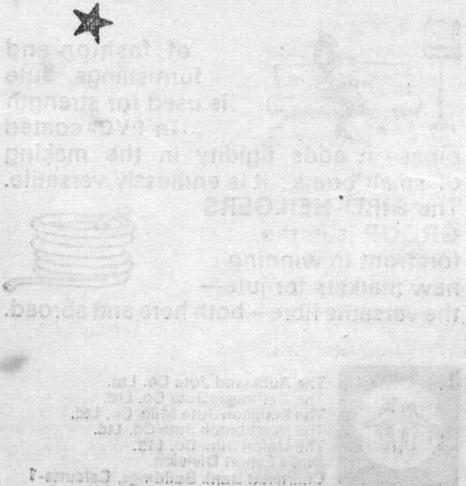
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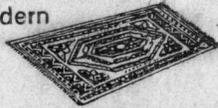
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