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VICTORY FOR CENTRE

THE inevitable has happened. The Centre has not failed to take advantage of the situation created by the UF parties by their interminable squabbles sprinkled liberally with fatal clashes. All UF parties were working to this end for the last few months, maybe some of them more consciously than others; but none could have been unaware that the Centre was waiting in the wings. Its standoffishness was simulated and designed to give time to the UF parties to take up inflexible positions of antagonism in the inner-UF dispute. In the mean time, the Centre calculated, the frequency of inter-party clashes would set off a chain reaction; the habitually lawless would become active, masquerading under different party labels; and the people's patience with the non-government would be stretched to the breaking point. The Centre's calculations have not gone wrong. No tear has been shed over the demise of the UF, no protest was heard from the people who had voted the UF to power a year ago with an unshakable majority. The Centre wrung full advantage out of the disenchantment of the people by timing its intervention on the morrow of the Bangla Bandh, called by the CPM and opposed by the CPI and its allies, in which 34 people were killed and over 100 injured. As the horror of this crowning piece of irresponsibility and insensitivity sank in the people, came President's rule so that they regard the intervention as an act of mercy. Many did; to them the Centre has become the dispenser of efficient and fair governance, the protector not merely of life and property but also of honour of women; the last, as if to denote the depth to which left parties could sink, had become the *piece de resistance* of the inter-party slandering in its last sickening phase.

The Centre is not satisfied with what the left parties have already done to the UF and, in the process, to themselves. In order that the UF constituents may not bury the hatchet with the disintegration of the Front it has kept the State Assembly alive. They have readily walked into the trap, and though the Front is gone, the craze for power is keeping their bitterness alive. The Bangla Congress is trying to force its anti-CPM recipe of a mini-front ministry with Congress support down the throat of its allies. The allies are unwilling, at least in their public postures, and they claim to be working for restoration of the 14-party

Front resplendent in its pristine glory. The Bangla Congress is not game for it, because its Gandhism is incompatible with the goondaism of the CPM; the mini-front parties are thus divided over their immediate programme. Whether these differences will persist or the parties will, after a suitable lapse of time, plump for a mini-front ministry remains to be seen. Much will perhaps depend on the bidding of the Centre.

The CPM is preparing, if its leaders are to be believed, to raise hell if a mini-front ministry takes over. But its quiet acceptance of President's rule does not suggest that it has much fight left. It has not yet given up the idea of heading an alternative ministry from which the Bangla Congress, the party of defectors, will be excluded. If, of course, no objection to taking in defectors from the defecting party. In fact, in its ministry-making efforts the party is depending largely on defections from other parties. If an alternative government is formed in West Bengal, it seems the choice will be between a ministry depending on the Congress for its survival and a ministry propped up by defectors. The parties should know that the Congress will take no other hue and defection is not sanctified even if its beneficiary becomes the CPM. By taking the bait dangled by the Centre they are merely prolonging President's rule which, as they themselves said so often before, is Congress rule by the backdoor. Let a few weeks pass in the fruitless effort at ministry-making, and it will be too late for another mid-term poll before the monsoon. The Centre's aim is to consolidate the position of the Congress during President's rule, and the left parties in their folly are aiding it. Already left politics in the State seems to have reverted to 1967 when the Congress could emerge as the largest single party because of the existence of two left fronts. The left parties will add enormously to their task if they allow the Centre to woo the people of West Bengal through unaccustomed munificence during a prolonged period of President's rule. But it seems too much to expect that the left parties, obsessed with a death-wish, will see through their folly.

National Development ?

All of them flexed their muscles: Karunanidhi, Gurnam Singh, V. P. Naik, Brahmananda Reddy. Mrs Gandhi was queen only in her own domain, New Delhi; let her enjoy herself there, centre-stage, make mincemeat of Minoo Masani, poke fun at the morosity named Asoka Mehta; let her do all that, they will not demur. But she must not, repeat must not, wangle with them; they, the Chief Ministers, are sovereign; even that funny Jana Sanghite, the Chief Executive Councillor of the Delhi administration, had ideas of grandeur—he could harangue the Prime Minister for a full three quarters of an hour on how to raise resources—Rs. 1,000 crores, no less—for having a lollipop of a nuclear deterrent.

That is the way it went, last week's meeting of the National Development Council, which was followed by another meeting of the Chief Ministers to discuss the price policy for rabi foodgrains. Give me the steel plant or else, roared Shri Karunanidhi: and Shri C. Subramaniam, coveted eyes on that seat to the Rajya Sabha, must have shivered in his shoes. What authority does the Planning Commission have in deciding which State or which area in a State is "backward" requiring special assistance? The criteria of backwardness are to be decided by the States, which will also decide how much of special assistance ought to flow to which area: the residual duty of the Centre then will be to cough up the money; Shri V. P. Naik went livid with rage: the allocation of Rs 175 crores in the Union Budget for special assistance to the States may be all right in principle, but how dare the Planning Commission claim the prerogative of being the final arbiter of deciding the division of these spoils between the different States? That divine right belongs exclusively to the National Development Council, meaning the Chief Ministers. How come the Union Cabinet has acquired the mendacity to suggest a lowering of the procurement price for wheat, Mr Gurnam Singh wondered and wondered: the kulak uber alles, and the Akalis have some votes in the Lok Sabha to ram the lesson home to the Prime Minister...

A cliché has its uses, for often it provides an apt description of a certain situation. The Chief Ministers have put Mrs Gandhi on notice: she is welcome to reign, but she must forsake all ambitions to rule. From now on, it is going to be a unilateral dispensation: the Centre will raise the funds, but the spending will be done by the States; the Centre will offer subsidies to the rich farmers, and simultaneously offer subsidies to the consumers too; the Centre must hold the price line, hike the defence expenditure, expand the size of the plan, look after the backward regions, states, districts et al: the State Governments on their own will do nothing except lobbying for the furtherance of the class interests they represent.

But Mrs Gandhi is hardly in a position to complain. Live and let live has been her consistent principle of policy. She loves to survive as Prime Minister of India, and she does not have the political strength of her own to call the bluff of the Chief Ministers. She has therefore to give in, all along the line. Despite the heroics of the Budget speech, such temerity can only negate all possibilities of economic growth and of narrowing income disparities. The Chief Ministers could not care less, till so long as the economic growth of their near and dear ones is not hampered. Mrs Gandhi too conceivably would not care, till so long as she remains the Prime Minister between now and the next few years. After that, let the devil—whatever its description—take the hindmost.

Only the gentlemen from West Bengal are non-participants in this cynical game. They have other worries, containing the CP (M), running each other down, propagating learned theses about the historiography of Indira Gandhi's progressive role. All of them barring a non-democratic few are for President's rule. They have no representation, for the present, thus in the National Development Council. No fantastic pitching of demands, no building of pressure on the socialist lady. They would even discover a quotation from Comrade Lenin approving their strategy.

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MARCH 28, 1970

Myth-Makers On Vietnam

"The war in South Vietnam is being slowly won by the Americans and their allies", says *The Economist*, whose only fear has always been that the White House may not remain hawkish enough "to hold up the dominoes." "The war in Vietnam is as good as over," says Mr Victor Zorza, whose unwillingness or inability to learn anything about South-East Asian affairs is matched only by the impudent cocksureness with which he pronounces upon them from time to time. In an article published in a Calcutta daily last week, Mr Zorza has conjured up remarkably confused visions of a leadership struggle in Hanoi which is said to have been won by a so-called peace faction led by Le Duan. The defeated war faction in this dream sequence is led by Truong Chinh with "powerful support from General Giap." Really, Mr Zorza! One ought to be a little more careful even in spinning fancies of the comics variety. For if one thing is accepted by all students of Vietnamese affairs about the personal equations in the North Vietnamese leadership, it is, to put it mildly, a lack of complete rapport between Truong Chinh and Giap. Though the differences have never affected the common pursuit of agreed policies, it has long been known that Giap has always resented Truong Chinh's ideological identification with the Chinese line. If Mr Zorza had to find a pro-Soviet faction in Hanoi his best bet would have been people like Pham Van Dong and Giap.

But in reality these convenient divisions are quite meaningless in the context of the Vietnamese national struggle. Several serious students of Vietnamese affairs have discovered this after painstaking research and repeatedly, though apparently in vain, told the Western world. It is true that Truong Chinh has always been inclined towards a policy of protracted war and radical internal measures; he had to leave the party secretaryship in 1956 after the failure of somewhat over-hasty and over-drastring land reforms. But none of the other leaders has ever denied the need for radical reforms or protracted guerilla

struggle. At the same time, before the famous Tet offensive all apparently agreed that the time had come for a major co-ordinated assault. But this was not to be the end of the guerilla struggle. The offensive served its purpose, and the fighting continues in a different form shaped by changing tactical requirements.

Notwithstanding Mr Zorza, there is not the slightest evidence that these requirements are not assessed and agreed upon by the leadership as a whole. If there is now some emphasis on economic recuperation, it is only in preparation for continued struggle, not as a prelude to peace on the enemy's terms. Mr Zorza, who does not hesitate to associate Le Duan with "right-wing policies", seems unaware of the fact that it is this former political commissar in the south and the party general secretary for the last 10 years who pressed hard for the most revolutionary strategy and the firmest possible commitment to the liberation of South Vietnam. Mr Zorza probably believes that a hawk has suddenly turned a dove. But why? At revisionist persuasion? It was perhaps Professor P. J. Honey who first spread the myth about Le Duan's pro-Russian leanings, merely on the strength of the fact that the latter was promoted to the key party post during a phase when Hanoi's relations with Moscow were particularly cordial. But experts with more intimate knowledge of Vietnam have pointed out that Le Duan has followed and continues to follow a line identical with Ho Chi Minh's which is neither pro-Russian nor pro-Chinese. For that matter, no such label would be accurate for any other leader in Hanoi. If Giap is more intensely nationalist than Truong Chinh, it does not mean that the former does not see the value of Chinese aid, nor that the latter follows the Maoist line in supersession of the Vietnamese national struggle.

In any case, what is the point of such speculation? Haven't men like Zorza learnt after so many of their confident predictions proved totally false? And if Hanoi is losing—if not already lost—the war, why do anti-communist crusaders like *The Economist* are so worried over "war-weariness in the United States?" And why do puppet victors like Thieu act in such nervous desperation at the slightest sign of dissent within their

own camp? Mr Tran Ngoc Chau, the South Vietnamese deputy who was recently sentenced to 20 years hard labour, said: "When you see all the efforts made by the Government to arrest one single 'pro-communist', you understand why the Vietnam war cannot be settled." And why it cannot be won by Thieu and his masters.

Moment Of Truth

"We are not lacking in Suhartos or Nasutions", warned Sihanouk just three years ago. No, the threat he warned about was not directed against his rule, for he considered his position to be stronger than that of Sukarno. The warning was meant for the left-wing students who had dared to call General Lon Nol a "valet of U.S. imperialism". Sihanouk knew General Lon had the making of a Suharto but he evidently hoped the General would be a loyal coupist. In fact the most surprising thing about the coup in Cambodia is that it lacked the element of surprise usually associated with coups. It was a coup d'etat that could clearly be seen coming over the last three years.

Danger signals could be seen as soon as the growing economic crisis began undermining the foundation of an artificial stability fostered by Sihanouk. Sihanouk's bizarre "Buddhist Socialism" came to be challenged by the people who were steadily sinking into misery on the one hand any by tycoons and generals on the other. While the reactionaries, especially the generals, nostalgic as ever about the halcyon days before 1963 when American dollars flowed in like the Mekong, stepped up an anti-communist frenzy to force Sihanouk's hands, the restive peasants and the unemployed youth took to the hills. Sihanouk was not much bothered. Imagining himself to be something of King Canute he thought he could halt class struggle by blowing a whistle or at least by bullying the one and bluffing the other. He would repress the left and scold the right and peace would be ensured. Likewise the main threat to Cambodian independence and peace—U.S. imperialism and its South Vietnamese and Thai puppets—could be

neutralized by a judicious mixture of conciliatory gestures and militant statements invoking the support of Peking. Sihanouk charmed himself with the belief that his anti-imperialist rhetoric notwithstanding, his anti-communist policy at home would deter Washington from overthrowing his rule. Knowing it full well that agents of imperialism were right by his side he hoped he could bluff them into passivity. "I warn you", he told them in November 1966, "to understand that I am not 60, like old Sukarno; I am only 40 years old. You can do as you wish but you must not think you can defeat me, for I am the kind of man who never accepts defeat. I will only accept punishment from the people and not from you, for you are not the people. You belong to a special category, another class, for you are neither Prince, nor people."

Now that the CIA and the generals have called the bluff Sihanouk perforce has to choose a harder but surer means of defeating imperialism. Sihanouk has now called upon all the patriotic forces to rally behind him and wage guerilla war to oust General Lon Nol, precisely the man he tried to shield from left-wing attacks, the man whom he gave countless certificates of patriotism. In the actual struggle against imperialism, Sihanouk has by now begun to discover that the most resolute fighters are those whom he accused of extra-territorial loyalty.

If Sihanouk now chooses to follow in the footsteps of another guerilla prince, Souphanouvong of the Pathet Lao, and calls for help from the communists, the Americans at least cannot accuse him of opportunism. Sihanouk had warned quite a long time back that if the CIA pulls off a coup in his country the "Cambodian resistance will be rapidly and inevitably transformed into a Red resistance...after banishing or deposing Sihanouk they would install in Cambodia not the regime of their dream but communism itself."

NOTICE

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Business Manager
Frontier

The American Liberals

In the late 1950s, there were many American liberals—Harvard or MIT dons, bright members of the Americans for Democratic Action, fans of Mary McCarthy, et al—who used to swear that they would give up the citizenship of the United States and leave the country in case Richard Milhous Nixon ever become President. Well, he has become President; they have done nothing of the sort. A new generation of these liberals, barely eighteen months ago, used to break out into derisive laughter every time the name of Nixon's candidate for the Vice-Presidency, Spiro Agnew—"Spiro who?"—was mentioned. Well, Spiro Agnew has now become a household word, and the so-called liberals have ceased their exercise in derision, Agnew—the scowling, bumbling mediocrity—has launched a fierce onslaught on the tribe of liberals and warned them to behave and conform to the straight and narrow path of true Americanism, or else. The threat has worked. The namby-pamby liberals have disappeared; all of a sudden they have become the Silent Minority of the American scene. Both in the press and on television, criticism of the Administration's policies has turned mute and cautious, dissent over Vietnam is being played down, and Spiro Agnew is being treated with a God-fearing respect which John F. Kennedy even in his heydays would have envied. Suddenly, it's Spiro Agnew in Blair House and all's right with the world.

So that is that, the death of another American dream. It has been a fond thesis for long with many people that the American heart is in the right place; once you allow these good liberals—these bright, smart ones, with chic wives—some time, they will straighten things out, they will extricate the nation from the Vietnam mess, force the pace of civil rights enforcement, step up the flow of aid to the developing countries beyond one per cent of the Gross National Product, discipline

the home-bred jingoes, etc. etc. It would hardly have been manners to point out that these gentlemen-liberals themselves were the original perpetrators of the Vietnam involvement, the Bay of Pigs was their fertile idea, the Cuban crisis of 1962 was their special contribution towards the consummation of the Cold War; or that one of them, John Kenneth Galbraith, while Ambassador in New Delhi, had behaved as if he was the first Viceroy sent out by the imperial United States to this heathen land.

The bark of the American liberals was also worse than their bite; their abject capitulation in the face of the Agnew onslaught has merely revealed them in their own true image. Soft living makes cowards of men; besides, once you start out with the basic premise that there is nothing basically wrong with the system, all that is needed is some refurbishing here and there, you end up in no time as defenders of the status quo, in the same barricade next to the rabid reactionaries. The smart set will now cringe on its knees, and beg forgiveness of the uncouth Middle America, whose intelligence quotient is near to zero and whose thoughts travel along the same wavelength with the Ku Klux Klan's. And it would perhaps be left to the Negro minority—scarcely a 12 per cent of the population, but virile, and suddenly astir with the pent-up indignation of two long centuries—to punish and reform the great American nation. It would be a painful process, and a process involving several combinations. This cannot be helped; there can be no tinkering with history.

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Topple One, Topple All

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

THROUGH a grotesque stretching of the Governor's powers, enough precedents have been created to rationalise the most perverse interpretations of the Constitution and to justify anything that the Centre wants done with a State or a Chief Minister with his legislature when his majority is in doubt. This was how the multiplicity of political standards that now obtains in relation to formation and survival of ministries has been integrated into a system. Call it a fraud on the Constitution but everything is constitutionally valid nevertheless.

The CPI(M)'s craving for martyrdom is pathetic. For, it should have known that everything is part of the game they have been playing off and on. And if it finds that the Constitution and the Governor's discretionary powers are always interpreted to its disadvantage, it perhaps cannot be helped because it is also part of the game. The CPI(M) thought that there was at least one unambiguous precedent of the leader of the single largest party being called upon to form a ministry, in the composite Madras State in 1952. But there are umpteen other instances where this did not exactly happen and Mr Y. B. Chavan's obiter dicta on this in Parliament left one in no doubt what the Centre expected Mr S. B. Dhawan in West Bengal to do. The objectives of President's rule, we are told, includes the restoration of the United Front (extra-constitutional for a Governor, that) which is a poor euphemism for saying that the Centre wants a mini-front ministry installed in the State as early as possible. The immediate preoccupation in the Rajya Sabha is the biennial elections in which Mr Bhupesh Gupta has to get re-elected. (When the dissolution of the West Bengal Assembly looked possible at one stage,

the CPI was lobbying for Mr Gupta's nomination to the Rajya Sabha as a "distinguished parliamentarian").

It is now certain that Mrs Gandhi has decided to part company with the CPI(M) and the implicit assurance she had given to Mr Sundarayya and Mr Jyoti Basu has no relevance to the changed situation. Mrs Gandhi's statement that the Congress-O was playing the CPI(M) game was supposed to set the pace for the coming break. The CPI was mounting pressure on the Centre to clamp down President's rule in West Bengal when the Kerala developments stole on it unawares. The manner in which Mr Achutha Menon secured adjournment of the House so that the defectors could be won back through some horse-trading is not qualitatively different from what Mr G. M. Sadiq did in Kashmir when his majority was in danger or the Haryana Chief Minister did when he faced a defeat. It looks as though a Governor can bail a Chief Minister out in such circumstances, using his discretionary powers to prorogue the legislature on the advice of the Chief Minister.

The Centre did not want a government dominated by the Marxists in West Bengal. In Kerala it did not want a Marxist government by proxy that Mr E. M. S. Namboodiripad was planning. The CPI's interests coincide with the Centre's on these issues. So the constitutional alibi for not permitting an alternative ministry in Kerala if the mini-front outfit collapsed was immediately found. The report of the Haryana Governor, Mr D. C. Pavate, over two years ago was resurrected to rationalise such a decision. The CPI lobbying was partly responsible for forcing the Centre into such a stance. Mr Pavate had then stated that though a particular leader might

claim (and even prove) his majority at a given moment, the Governor need not recognise the claim because the majority might be momentary and might change through defections and counter-defections. So all that matters is the subjective assessment of the Governor. The report was circulated that no alternative ministry would be permitted in Kerala and the State would go under President's rule until 1972. The voting has not taken place in the Kerala Assembly at the time of writing this column. But what has been happening in New Delhi gives an indication of the CPI-Centre joint operation in Kerala to salvage the Achutha Menon ministry.

On the whole there seems to be a let up in Mrs Gandhi's toppling game. Mr Jagjivan Ram's tilts at the Gujarat ministry do not have the full support of the Prime Minister. Mr Jagjivan Ram is not keen on continuing as Congress President and Mr D. P. Mishra, quarantined from political office for six years by the Supreme Court, might replace him one of these days. The cadre-based party that the new-look Congress under Mrs Gandhi's leadership promised to be has turned out to be a toppling-based party and little else. But there have been at least two major set-backs to her toppling efforts and the ministries loyal to her face toppling now.

The plans had been drawn up for a quiet coup in Orissa but the PSP is in a remorsefully bitter mood now. The image of the "new" Congress has suffered with the N. G. Goray episode. The style of the new party's functioning is bossist. The deal struck at the Centre between Mr Jagjivan Ram and the PSP leadership on the pooling of surplus votes amounted to this: a coalition with the PSP in Orissa when the ministry there was toppled, and Mr N. G. Goray's return to the Rajya Sabha from Maharashtra. In return the PSP was to support the tottering Daroga Rai ministry in Bihar and back Mr C. Subramaniam for the Rajya Sabha from Tamil Nadu. The part of the package covering Mr

Goray's election took Mr Chavan for granted. The result was a mini-revolt by the Maharashtra PCC and a possible victim of this will be the Young Turk leader, Mr Mohan Dharia, whom the Maharashtra Congress may not back wholeheartedly for the Rajya Sabha. When the PSP found itself ditched in Maharashtra, it took a swipe at Mr C. Subramaniam's party in Tamil Nadu, withholding support to his candidature. Frantic efforts are being made to reassure the PSP of the intention of the "new" Congress to honour its commitments. But it is now a crisis of faith on both the sides. The Chavan-Indira Gandhi conflict is acquiring a new edge.

The total lack of discipline in the ruling Congress and a growing atmosphere of indiscipline is proof that it is no different from the old Congress. Mrs Gandhi wanted Miss Mary Naidu re-elected to the Rajya Sabha from Andhra Pradesh but Chief Minister Brahmananda Reddy ticked her off. He cannot assure Miss Naidu's return and if she were to be a candidate, the return of Mr D. Sanjiviah, Union Labour Minister, would also be in doubt, he told the Prime Minister. In Orissa, the Parliamentary Board's nominee could not get two partymen to file his nomination papers while Mr Biju Patnaik, his candidature vetoed by the High Command, is setting up his own candidate. In Bihar, Mrs Jehnara Jaipal Singh, denied a ticket, is contesting as an Independent with Jharkhand support and yet continues as Deputy Minister for Education at the Centre. Mr V. P. Naik has been unrelenting in his determination to defeat Mr N. G. Goray—to hell with the accord with the PSP reached by somebody in New Delhi.

The State chieftains are now in a position to bully the High Command because their leverage is greater in a truncated party. The High Command has ceased to function in vast areas of the country either because the party does not exist as a viable force in some of the States (Gujarat and Mysore) or

because the bosses have begun to play their own game.

What has gone virtually unnoticed amidst the political pandemonium is the attempt of Mr Chavan to build an all-India faction of his own. Kashmir's Mir Qasim is believed to be his protegee against Mrs Gandhi's G. M. Sadiq. Sheikh Abdullah has been getting closer to Mr Sadiq and our man in Moscow, Mr D. P. Dhar, has been playing a big role in

Kashmir politics from his hotel room in New Delhi, for how many weeks no one remembers. Mr Dhar is an aspirant for Chief Ministership and Moscow is too dull a place for him. The Young Turk revolt against Mr Jagjivan Ram (over his overtures to the Swatantra party for toppling the Gujarat ministry) can be traced to Mr Chavan. And 1972 is not too far away.

March 22, 1970

The Dilemma Of The CPM

ASHOK RUDRA

WHAT motivated the CPM to suddenly change its line and make a bid for power immediately after Ajoy Mukherjee announced his decision to resign? If it was really to form a ministry, it does not make any sense. The CPM leadership is too shrewd and the expressed hostility of the Front colleagues was too blatantly clear for it to entertain any illusions on that score. Was it then a coldly worked out plan of action to expose the CPI for what it is and its claim to being the only party of whom the bourgeoisie is afraid? If that was what the CPM wanted to achieve, its success does not leave anything to desire. When did we see last in India a political force that strikes such terror in the hearts of all possessors of privilege and power and opportunists and political careerists of all sorts? What a line-up against a single party! Both the Congress parties declaring that they will not support a government headed by Jyoti Basu, ten constituents of the erstwhile United Front writing to the Governor that they will not join nor tolerate any government formed by the CPM, Indira Gandhi directing the Governor of Kerala to act constitutionally and help Achutha Menon to form a mini-front government and directing the Governor of West Bengal to act constitutionally again and prevent Jyoti Basu from forming a similar government; sundry reactionary leaders of Swatantra and other denominations

urging the outlawing of the Marxists, and the jute press declaring a war of propaganda against the CPM by dishing out stories about wives being lifted in the streets of Calcutta to be returned in two days and husbands not reporting to the police; the very fact that such an array of enemies have to band together and range such a battery of guns by itself does a lot of credit to the CPM.

Is being universally unpopular a virtue in itself? The rub lies with the fact that the CPM is not universally unpopular. On the contrary it is the largest single party within the State, enjoying the support of vast sections of workers, peasants and the lower middle class. There are no signs at all that it has lost any of its popularity despite all its alleged misdeeds. People say it is just the other way round. According to them the main reason why the other constituents of the Front are hostile to the CPM is that it is taking away mass support from them. Be that as it may, does it not matter who loves you and who hates you? Does it not matter that the Centre, the two Congresses, the Jana Sangh and every other party of the Right are determined not to allow the CPM to remain in power but are disposed in a friendly way to the CPI? Achutha Menon said at the time of forming his minority government: I do not want the support of the Congress. What can I do if they will support me? In-

deed, what can he do? But can one not conclude that if both the Congresses find nothing to object to CPI's policies, that constitutes as clear a class definition of the CPI as there can be?

What will the CPI say now about its position in Kerala? At the time it joined with the Kerala Congress to form a minority government, the most important argument it gave out as explanation for its action was that it wanted at any cost to prevent President's rule in Kerala. In West Bengal however the CPI wrote to the Governor that it would on no account accept a government headed by the CPM. That is, it declared openly and officially that it preferred President's rule to any government with the CPM and without the Bangla Congress. Here is a party, claiming to represent workers and peasants, that refuses (in West Bengal) to support a government led by the largest party of workers and peasants but agrees (in Kerala) to join with sections of the bourgeoisie to form a government while keeping out that very party. Can there be any doubt that if it was the CPM rather than the Bangla Congress which withdrew from the government, the CPI would have continued with the government in the name of preventing President's rule? To all those who do not place their party loyalties above their loyalties to the people, to all those who are not blinded by their ancient hatred of CPM leaders at the personal level, two conclusions are inescapable. First, the CPI trusts and is trusted by the bourgeoisie, second, the CPI does not want to accept the fact that whatever its claims to superiority over the CPM, the masses both in West Bengal and Kerala as yet refuse to recognise it. They give their votes to the CPM in preference to it. The CPI is prepared to do anything whatsoever for usurping from the CPM the position the latter is entitled to by virtue of the mass support it gets.

But to come back to the question: what motivated the CPM to make its bid for power? It is not entirely convincing that it only wanted to expose the CPI and its fellow travel-

lers. There was perhaps some genuine interest, some hope however wild, that it would manage to get hold of the entity of state power for some period, however brief. Why did the CPM betray, so pathetically, its ardent desire for clinging on to power? Why did it behave like a man who knows he is dying, who nevertheless goes on crying "I don't want to die. Doctor, make me live for one more day!" Because the CPM did not know what to do without the semblance of power it enjoyed from being in the government. Because the CPM, whatever it says, has not done any preparations whatsoever to carry out mass struggle without any support from the State power, let alone in defiance of the tyranny exercised by the State power. Yet there cannot be any genuine revolutionary movement without the masses being organised to resist that State power. Instruments of State power can be used to promote revolutionary goals only when the State as a whole has been won over by the revolutionaries. But at a time when the State power resided at the Centre and in the firm hands of the bourgeoisie, being in power in West Bengal and Kerala does not give a party any means to bring about any fargoning social changes. There is only one thing that a revolutionary party joining a State Government can do: it can encourage the formation of insurrectionary forces and prevent the State power from crushing them before they manage to create liberated zones. This is no abstract Leninism or Maoism but straightforward application of Marxism to present-day Indian conditions. The understanding behind this position of course is that there is no further possibility of either promoting any significant economic development or of bringing about any major social changes within the present framework of production relations in India. The CPI does not of course subscribe to this thesis; as such it is consistent in hanging around the drawing rooms and ante-chambers of Indira Gandhi and Chavan for being called upon to share power at the Centre. It may even be

actually rewarded for its patient waiting, considering the speed with which it is dissolving its identity in the bosoms of the Indirite Congress. But the CPM is caught in the inconsistency that in its ideological understanding it does not set any stores by piecemeal reforms and parliamentarism; yet it has failed to chalk out any line of action at the mass front which does not count upon any help from the State government. This explains the lack of direction exhibited by EMS. This explains Jyoti Basu's frantic attempt to stay on in power in West Bengal. While in power, instead of helping the formation of liberated areas they hunted down the Naxalites attempting to do the same. Thrown out of power, the only thing they can do is to wait for a return to the assembly.

* * *

The psychological explanation of erotic dreams is easy to seek, and so is that of the wide currency that is received by slanders of sexual misbehaviour. In a country where sex is as socially restricted as in India, a sure method of getting the ear of the public is to add some sex appeal to the political smear writing. Until recently public life in India has been free of this particular form of muck. Newspapers in the developed Western countries specialise a great deal in publicising and dramatising real life stories of sexual crimes and misdemeanour. This has not been true until now of our major newspapers, but it has started to be so in very recent times. It began with the hair raising stories about the orgy of sex and violence that took place on the borders of Rabindra Sarobar. The Ghosh Commission's putting a nail on the lie has not affected in the least the newspapers' and political leaders' determination to use this primitive stick to beat the opponent. The left parties in India are basically middle-class parties and the middle class in India is only too recently born out of the feudal classes. This is only too glaringly revealed in the frequent references to molestation of women. For only in a feudal set of values can

molestation of women be considered a worse evil than physical violence over men. It is not only Ajoy Mukherjee and *The Statesman* that have been talking. About women's honour being sullied, A. K. Gopalan accused members of the Central Reserve Police in action in Kerala of having committed rape on peasant women. Can the left parties not agree to observe a code of not revealing their final attitude towards women while vilifying each other?

Frankly Speaking

SANJOY

THE liberators of the people from barbarism now occupy the centre of the stage, or, at least, the front pages of mass circulation newspapers. Some of the dailies sharpened the panic of the middle classes at the insecurity of person and property. The legendary wife who was kidnapped, raped and returned to the silent husband, only to die, has done her bit. The same papers are now going all out to highlight the role of the trigger-happy police in restoring public confidence.

A number of rowdies will be held for a time and then allowed to operate on a level the citizens are used to. But other 'anti-social' elements will continue to have a very rough time. For the first time in a little over 12 months, hundreds of Marxist workers will realise that the ex-Home Minister was not able to change the mentality of the police at all. Those among the workers and peasants who do not read or write may attempt to act as before, unaware of the changes in Calcutta and of the strength of the police, now reinforced by the support of the jubilant and revengeful anti-CPM parties, but they will get no quarters. And perhaps the literate among them will begin to wonder why Mr Jyoti Basu had proposed a steep rise in budgetary allocations for the same police. A testing time has begun for the CPM rank and file. Some of them had

been told of an extra-parliamentary wing of the party as a sop to the militants. But missions to Indira are more likely.

The Fourth Estate, the press, will give the CPM no respite. The reporters, the photographers, the leader-writers are all busy like gadflies. And they have a solid base of Hindu readers who are moved to tears and anger by the picture of a mother weeping over murdered Hindu *bhadrolok*. They do not bother about the six workers killed in a rayon factory during the anti-strike agitation fomented there by the CPI. Workers' lives are expendable. They have no mothers.

The Naxalites are likely to have a hell of a time. But they are prepared for it, and have little patience for the sympathy of a petty bourgeois weekly.

The Strike

What was the strike of March 17 for or against? It was against the resignation of Mr Ajoy Mukherjee who dealt the *coup de grace* to the United Front. But since the Marxists themselves had been saying that the UF was comatose, a patient whose death rattle could be heard, and since the people knew that it would not survive in the present form, mourning over its eventual expiry did not perhaps become the elected. It was, however, not a condolence strike but a protest against the possibility of another government being formed without the CPM. It was for the retention of the CPM in the ministry. The Marxists do not seem to mind a revival of the wretched old ministry or the formation of a new one so long as they are in. Their tactics, within the framework they have adopted, are understandable. Cut out the nonsense behind the talk of a new, class-based UF. Being rather dense in these matters, this writer did not at first realise why the CPI and other parties had started fuming against the idea. The reason became clear last week—the CPM was counting on defections. It would have been an amusing sight indeed if it had been allowed to seduce people. Forget

the morality or immorality of the move. It is a matter of getting used to certain things.

About the strike. It was clear to the parties which decided to oppose it that the cost of opposition would be bloody and heavy. They could have opposed it in principle but refrained from active resistance for avoiding proletarian bloodshed. The CPM, too, could have, for once, accepted the principle of no-coercion. It is the biggest party in West Bengal, and it was the first time it had alone called for a strike. Some moderation would not have been unbecoming. But prestige was all. The consequences were foregone.

During the widespread and continuing food movement in 1966, fifty or so people were killed in police firings. Last week, within 30 hours, over 26 people died and over a hundred were injured in the course of inter-party clashes. Except for the loss of production, the vested interests were not affected. Workers killed workers; all sorts of weapons were used. The 1966 movement led to the fall of the Congress ministry a year later. The consequences of the strike of March 17 would be bitter and strengthen the vested interests.

Death these days is so commonplace. The parties have scored their points—in skulls. The dead would no doubt be called shaheeds, martyrs, but nobody would care to do something to relieve the agony and distress of their families. Going out to work in defiance of the strike call or to prevent others from working and being burnt or buried later—and for what a cause! The whole thing is painful beyond words. Their parties, of course, might point out with some pride that the workers do not always struggle for economic gains alone and the SUC congratulate itself on choosing a very tall monument for the martyrs, whose number is going up.

But the parties should heed a warning. During the disturbances some MLAs were attacked. This trend would grow in the even bitterer days of inter-party clashes that lie ahead. Blood! Blood! Blood! But the blood

will not be of the poor alone. The bombs might come home to explode.

One thing that was uncommon before, during and after the strike was the general air of panic. Before the Maidan rally of the CPM on March 15 rumours went round that it was sort of a long march, that the villagers, quite a few of them armed, would swarm into the city, surround it, and do many unexpected things. People living in the Chowringhee area were jittery. On Monday shutters of many shops went up and down many times on Lenin Sarani and elsewhere as the crafty old man took a long time to see the elderly dandy who loves the sound of his voice (according to Stalin's daughter) with his letter of resignation. Pedestrians in Park Street in the evening—already rather unsteady—hurried their steps when the news was broadcast. On Wednesday, the same nervousness was noticed from midday on when Mr Jyoti

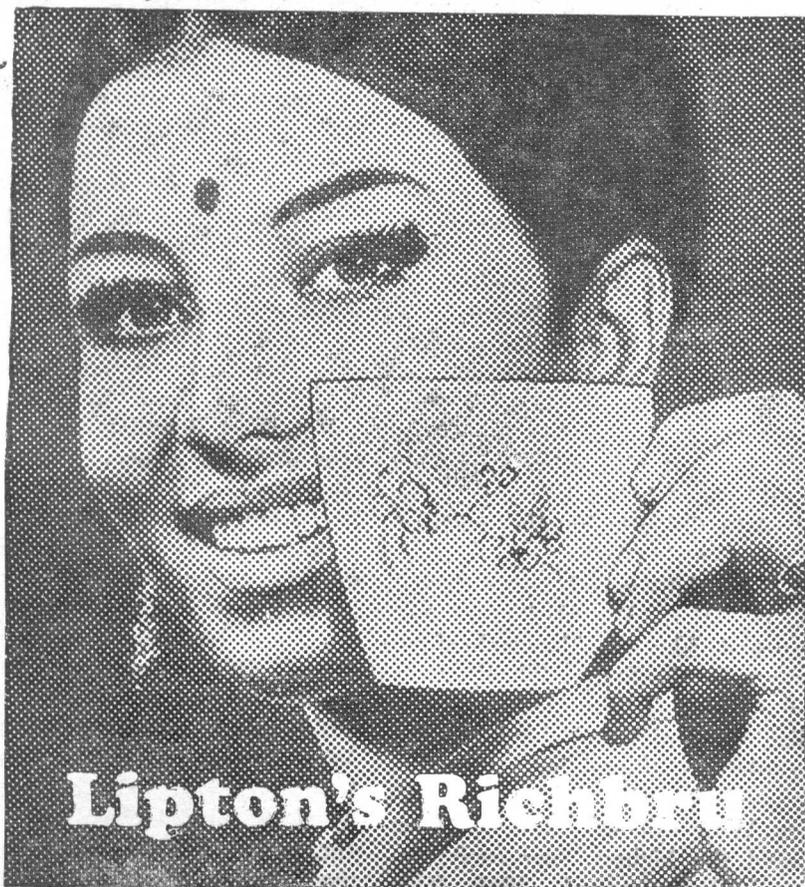
Basu saw the Governor. People thought that his disappointment would lead to another popular explosion. The city has seen and is used to such explosions. What is of recent origin is the association of toughs and rowdies with the leftist parties. What is new is the bomb scare.

How To Kill?

The ways should be and are different in city and village. Mr Charu Majumdar of the CP(ML) thinks that, at this stage of the armed struggle in the countryside, bows and arrows or guns should be avoided. The carriers of these arms feel nervous themselves. Perhaps the chances of detection and arrest are much greater if one carries these weapons. Revolvers should be reserved for petty-bourgeois revolutionaries who can use them to avoid arrest. In general, the village guerillas should rely on choppers, daggers, spears etc.

That is, they should pounce on the class enemy—the jotedar or the moneylender. Physical contact with them, one surmises, intensifies the revolutionary hatred felt for the exploiter. Further, as Mr Majumdar says in another context, the day will soon come when no one who has not dipped his hands in the blood of the class enemy would be considered a true communist.

In Calcutta and suburbs, however, the militants who, unlike the village guerilla, attack people of their own class affiliations, know that they cannot do with only choppers or daggers. Hence the extensive manufacture and use of bombs. The users are thrilled by the sound of action. There is something dramatic about the business, and the results are quick and substantial. Most of the deaths on March 17, one presumes, were due to bombs. Everything moves faster in cities, and the tactics have got to be different.



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LIPTON'S MEANS
GOOD TEA

LRC-5

In America too!

Gentle reader, do not think that the adoption of these techniques is an Oriental aberration.

In America, the crime rate went up by 11 per cent last year over 1968 and the editor of the *The Statesman* is reported to be planning a series of leaders urging the Rockefellers to remove the Nixon administration (Mr Nixon is stockpiling aspirin.) What is most alarming is the cult of the bomb. An article in *The Times* (London) says that in America the home-made bomb is rapidly taking over from the revolver and the rifle as the violent instrument of potential political change. The targets, in contrast with those of inter-party clashes here, are stores, skyscrapers, police stations, public utility buildings, university and military training offices. Most of the bombs are linked with the radical movement. "The student revolt has moved from the demonstration and protest stage to guerilla warfare on a limited scale", said a policeman. The new anarchists, white more often than black, are young people with a relatively affluent background who have served an apprenticeship at least in an extremist organisation. The number of females among them is large. The anarchists, for their know-how, read bombing manuals, some of them official Army handbooks.

A San Francisco policeman said: "We are dealing with people who are like the old Russian Nihilists. They strike out at a symbol, not an individual."

With us cruelty begins at home. Supporters of the once United Front must, with the aid of parliamentary politics and bombs, murderously put their own house in order before they can think—if at all—of the real enemy. That enemy has become an indistinct symbol in the simmering heat and hatred of summer.

Titbits

After the promulgation of PR in West Bengal, the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation is reported to have recovered, from

Writers' Building and houses of the Minister or Ministers concerned, some 100 files relating to the development of this city. One of these was about the question whether the CMPO should release a spacious hall, hired at a rent of Rs 300 a day, since its training programme had been terminated. No decision was taken on this in the past eight months.

The Nightmare Has Ended and young writers, artists and playwrights collected again on the Maidan on March 21, after a long year, for the Mukta Mela. Did they celebrate

their reunion with the following free verse from the New English Bible?

The people who walked
in darkness
have seen a great light:
light has dawned upon them,
dwellers in a land as dark
as death.
Thou hast increased their joy
and given them great gladness;
they rejoice in thy presence as
men rejoice at harvest,
or as they are glad when they
share out the spoil;
for thou hast shattered the yoke
that burdened them.

West Bengal : Between Two Worlds

ARJUN BARUI

AT the time of independence, West Bengal was one of the most industrialised States of India. Calcutta was the centre of British capital in this country, although Bombay had already outstripped Calcutta as the centre of Indian capital, and was already showing signs of overtaking Calcutta as the most important industrial and financial centre of India. Now the hegemony of Bombay is no longer in doubt. The slow erosion of British capital in Calcutta has not been followed by a spectacular growth of Indian capital: the decline of Calcutta was perhaps inevitable after the partition of Bengal. But this decline has been hastened by a steady reinvestment of the projects of industries and trades centred in Calcutta in other parts of India—or outside India.

If industrial growth was slowed down in West Bengal, it was not compensated by a rapid growth of agriculture in the State. Thanks to a naturally high fertility of the soil (by Indian standards) and thanks to the concentration of mining, manufactures and financial and trading activities, West Bengal may well have enjoyed the highest per capita income in India around 1945. This has now fallen behind that of Pun-

jab, Haryana, Maharashtra and Gujarat. It continues to be one of the two or three most industrialised States in India, however; but if present trends continue, this situation is also likely to change.

Measured by the usual indices of performance, West Bengal is certainly among the most developed States of India: its per capita income is one of the highest in India; the fraction of its income generated outside agriculture is also one of the highest; it is one of the most urbanised States in India. Its literacy rate, in spite of a shocking record of back-sliding, is still above the all-India average.

But West Bengal is in a fair way towards losing most of these relative advantages. Its industrial growth lags behind that of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Delhi and Punjab; its agricultural growth lags behind that of Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, among others. Its performance has been particularly bad in those sectors in which private enterprise counts most. West Bengal received a bonus in terms of a high rate of investment by the Central Government during the period 1956-65; with the decisive decline of public investment since 1966, this source of growth has

ceased, and West Bengal's retrogression in relation to the more dynamic States of India has become painfully obvious. Apart from the relative stagnation in agriculture and industry, West Bengal has also been a laggard in the field of literacy: from being one of the two most literate States of India, it has become one of the less literate States. At independence, West Bengal was not probably characterised by a high degree of underemployment or unemployment in agriculture. There was a steady migration of people from Bihar, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh into the rural (and urban) areas of West Bengal. Yet by all accounts, there now exists a heavy dose of underemployment in the State. Even a few years back, the rate of urban or educated unemployment in the State was not exceptionally high by all-India standards; yet today there is a substantial pool of unemployed labour even among highly skilled graduates in science and engineering.

West Bengal also suffers from urban problems of quite staggering proportions. The shortage of private housing and public facilities of various kinds in Calcutta easily sets a world record among cities of such dimensions. These problems were partly inherited from pre-independence times. But the very high rate of growth of population (through natural increase and through migration from East Pakistan), the corruption of municipal administration and the shocking dereliction of civic duty on the part of the richer people of Calcutta have aggravated the problems beyond the point of solution by the methods usually available to municipal bodies.

The mounting volume of unemployment, the stagnation in agriculture, the slackening of investment by the public sector and the stresses of an unbearably chaotic urban life have combined with an eagerness on the part of ordinary people for social change to create several problems for the efficient functioning of the existing system. Efficient functioning of the system as it is demands not only the observance of "law and order"

but also the acceptance of some proximate, if only provisional, goal by all the participants in the system.

Can the system be adjusted in such a way as to satisfy these minimum demands? One can suggest several types of tinkering. One would be increasing the total amount invested in West Bengal by the public sector. It would be difficult, however, to convince other States—particularly the backward States—about the equity of such action. As I have already noted, West Bengal is not a backward State by the usually accepted criteria. Secondly, one could suggest tackling the problem of urban and rural unemployment as a problem of social insurance. If the provision of social insurance could be connected with the execution of productive, labour-intensive work, this would also add to the total capital stock available to its community. (Incidentally, the problem of a low rate of literacy in the villages can be tackled, within the present social framework, only by subsidizing the poorer peasants and agricultural labourers to the extent of the forgone gross earnings of their school-going children, and not just by remitting school fees). However, the State Government alone would not have the resources to provide any comprehensive measure of social insurance, nor would it be able to mobilize vastly greater resources without measures of expropriation of the richer classes—something that it cannot do without altering the Constitution. The Central Government is not at all likely to adopt social insurance for the country as a whole: that would demand social changes not far short of revolution. Who will be the backers of the Central Government for such a move? Thirdly, the State Government could try to stimulate its local entrepreneurs to invest more in industry. Under the present conditions, the Government cannot really help entrepreneurs of a particular linguistic group without violating the legal provisions of fair treatment. Even if the Government could get round the law by employing informal methods, it is unlikely

that small entrepreneurs can prevail against the large financial resources, extensive trading organisation and the economies of large-scale operation characteristic of the established investors. However, subsidizing investment in agriculture on a large scale is distinctly on the cards. But there the socialistic, or rather redistributive, programmes enunciated by the leftist parties, and the land hunger of the poorest peasants will be a formidable obstacle. Is it better to give loans to an unemployed engineer to go and set up a model farm, or to subsidize the operation of semi-literate, prosperous farmers who know something about farming? Finally, the Government could try and cajole the established industrialists to invest more in West Bengal. In an earlier article (August 23, 1969) I had argued that this might well be a hopeless task. Subsequent events have strengthened, rather than weakened, that judgment. West Bengal has still to recover from industrial recession when the rest of India is booming; partly as a result of that recession and partly as an explosion of long and justly felt grievances, industrial unrest continues unabated here. This has further damaged the incentive to invest of the big industrialists. If the big industrial houses can foresee the dangers of their withdrawal of capital from West Bengal, they might think better of it. But I don't think they are inclined to regard it in this light: West Bengal is no longer a good investment risk for them. They will wait for a change of government or a change of heart, or a chance to wield the big stick before venturing on large-scale investment within the State borders. If none of these expectations materialise, the rest of India is there. West Bengal will then merge better with Bihar, Assam and Orissa, except that it will be a de-industrialised State, whereas the others were never industrialised, with a far greater potency for explosion into fascism or bona fide communism.

Wales of India

West Bengal could become, hope-

fully for the Indian capitalists, the Wales of India. There is the same initial development of industry—particularly heavy industry—within the State followed by its decline. There is the same almost total dissociation of the main linguistic group—the Bengali—from the means of production in industry. Agriculture is equally unprogressive, with little immediate prospect of rapid improvement (in the absence of major sources of irrigation). There is the same insular pride in literary culture. But the rest of India is not England; the Bengalis cannot migrate to become school teachers in other States. There are too many teachers there too. There is no Patagonia outside India for them to sail or fly to. And Bengalis are too numerous, too densely planted on the soil. Whatever solution—or permanent impasse—emerges here, it will affect the rest of India vitally, for good or ill. Santiniketan cannot remain permanently the place of Eistedfodd for the President or the Prime Minister of India to grace with his or her annual presence.

The people of West Bengal are reacting more and more with acts which contravene the dictates of "law and order". A languorous acquiescence in decadence is ruled out both by the poverty and the temper of the ordinary people. The various constituents of the "United Front" have further aggravated the problem of erosion of authority by fighting among themselves and by showing how petty the ends of "Leftist" leaders can be. Even without the in-fighting, it is doubtful, of course, whether the United Front could proceed far with a reformist programme without massive Central assistance. This Central assistance would have to be in the form of a unity of programmes throughout the country, and not just in the form of a greater dose of Central financial assistance. A much greater dose of Central financial assistance to West Bengal would be difficult to justify by ordinary ethical criteria and carry through politically: help to "distressed gentlefolk" invites either ridicule or cynicism.

Would a broader programme be possible? A programme of comprehensive social insurance throughout India, socialization of land, the toppling of the bloated bureaucracy, the eradication of neo-colonial exploitation would demand that the reformist parties stretch their hands across the frontiers of different States, and evolve a common language of struggle. Such efforts are confined to the conclaves of intellectuals, who may be able to talk to one another (in English, and in the style of the *New Statesman* or the *New Left Review*) but cannot talk to common people.

If reformist efforts fail to cover the whole of India, and encompass the problems of West Bengal within a more comprehensive programme of action, then the de-industrialization of West Bengal will naturally lead to sporadic violence. All such acts of violence are not revolutionary: revolutionary activities have to be purposive, and cannot be just the flush on the face of a patient suffering from fever. Random violence also invites naked force. If West Bengal alone is affected by the sporadic desire for violent solutions to local problems, a military-bureaucratic effort at "containing" such violence is highly likely to succeed. If the justification for revolution is the restoration of the privileges of the gentlefolk of West Bengal, this will not create a common vocabulary of struggle in Bihar, Orissa, Assam, Madhya Pradesh or Uttar Pradesh. The de-industrialization of West Bengal is a facet of the uneven development of different regions in an underdeveloped private enterprise economy. The combating of that system of neo-colonial exploitation demands a broadness of strategy which has not yet emerged in India. But the "activist" groups might well retort, what right have the intellectuals to talk, when they have failed in their minimal duty of evolving a framework of social criticism? That retort would be eminently just, but would still not solve the problem of converting the potential for violence into the potential for revolution.

Land To The Tiller

SUMANTA BANERJEE

THE deadliest four-letter word in the Indian political vocabulary today is "land." Ominous warnings about upheavals over land are being sounded by political circles ranging from the ex-American ambassador to the communist parties. What is surprising however is a curious sort of unanimity that is emerging in the solutions suggested by almost all these political interests to prevent explosions in the countryside and soothe the land hungry peasantry.

The need to grant land to the tillers is now a commonly accepted formula. Here are some instances. Stressing the need for land reforms in India, Mr Chester Bowles said some years ago: "...if all of India's cultivable land could be distributed equally, each rural family would receive approximately six acres. This is twice the average land holding in Japan." (*A View from New Delhi*).

Addressing a conference of State Chief Ministers in Delhi on November 28 last year, Mrs Gandhi warned that "in the long run the very foundations of agricultural development would be jeopardized if millions of tenants and share-croppers were denied security of tenure." (*Economic Times*).

The economic policy resolution adopted by Mrs Gandhi's Congress at its Bombay session recommended as a matter of urgency, among other steps, "conferment of security of tenure on actual tillers of the land and settlement of landless agricultural labour on surplus land."

The CPI General Secretary, Mr C. Rajeswara Rao, told a Press conference in Delhi on December 31 last year that about 21 crore acres could be distributed among the peasantry if a proper ceiling was imposed, and the cultivable waste land and the unclassed forest could be made available.

The former CP(M) Minister for West Bengal's Land and Land Revenue, Mr Harekrishna Konar, told ano-

MARCH 28, 1970

ther Press Conference in Delhi some time ago that India should emulate the Japanese land reforms carried out under General MacArthur's guidance immediately after the end of the Second World War. "The major objective of any land reform programme should be to do away with intermediary rights, to break the concentration of land in a few hands, to distribute land to the landless and land-poor peasants free of cost and to provide security to tenants and share-croppers." (Press conference in New Delhi on November 29, 1969).

Are land reforms becoming another instrument in the cold war, to be wielded by mutually opposing interests like the U.S. Government and the Indian communist parties? Or are they all seriously interested in giving land to the tillers? If so, how can one explain the unanimous acceptance of such a change in economic relations by warring class interests?

It has been customary for communists so far to dismiss Congress promises of land to the tiller as nothing more than shrewd demagogic manoeuvres. They fancy that the ruling classes still have the support of the U.S. Government in anachronistic agrarian structures. But this appears to be an inadequate evaluation. A look at history would reveal that the bourgeoisie can often adopt and even implement popular measures to consolidate its own position. Nationalization, for instance, was once an anathema to the orthodox bourgeoisie of the West. Today it is an accepted form of economy in many capitalist countries.

To quote a Western economist, "The mere existence of Communism, by a kind of repellent effect, makes us turn away from novel solutions and condemns us to the status quo, or in some spheres even to retrogression: this is a most unfortunate reaction, for no system can develop except by changing its techniques... Everyone has a perfect right to believe that the capitalist engine is more powerful and efficient than its collective counterpart, but such an

opinion becomes untenable if the capitalist engine is voluntarily set at half speed." (Alfred Sauvy in *Cahiers économiques*, August-September, 1952)

Land reforms therefore, like planning or nationalization, can very well be another technique for the bourgeoisie to set its engine at full speed.

Japanese Experiment

In this connexion, the experiment in Japan during the American occupation is noteworthy. The land reform programme there planned "to ensure that those who till the land of Japan shall henceforth have an equal opportunity to enjoy the fruits of their labour." As a result, 94% of the rural families became land owners.

The motive behind the U.S. decision to give land to the tillers was far from socialistic "War or no war, American occupation or no American occupation, it is unlikely that the tenancy system (in Japan)... would have lasted for long without modification." (R. P. Dore, *Land Reform in Japan*).

According to a covering letter written by Mr George Atcheson Jr., (State Department representative attached to MacArthur's Headquarters in Japan) to a memorandum on land reforms submitted to the U.S. Government after the war, the "perpetually depressed conditions in agriculture" aided the Army's rise to power and constituted "a fertile field for military propaganda" in the future.

Quite obviously, the Japanese land reforms were in the vital interest of the American administration to prevent Japan from returning to the warpath. Fears of peasant uprising and a left-wing exploitation of the situation were also decisive factors.

The success of the experiment in Bolivia is perhaps even more relevant for India. A left-of-centre government run by the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario announced the agrarian reform decree in Bolivia in 1953. Before that 80% of the agricultural labour force used to receive only 10% of the income derived from land. After the reforms,

about 40% of the available land passed into the hands of the small farmers. (U.N. Economic Survey of Latin America, 1954). The reforms eliminated one rural social class, that of the latifundias, and converted the poor Indian serf into the owner of a plot of land.

It is significant that much of the reform programme was made possible with U.S. aid. American aid to Bolivia during the reforms was about \$25,000 a year. This aid continued in spite of protests in the USA against the decision to help a "Marxist" government in Bolivia.

The results of the reforms were evident some time later. The MNR government became riddled with corruption and factional squabbles, and in 1964 a military junta took over power and established a dictatorship. The peasants acquiesced passively in the change. Obviously, they did not become a political force in spite of the benevolent gestures of the MNR government.

Significantly also, the military junta did not rescind the land reform. The wisdom of the policy was evident some years later, when Che Guevara went to Bolivia to lead the guerillas there. The peasantry, the most important asset for the success of guerilla warfare, remained aloof and sometimes even cooperated with the counter-guerilla forces. It was this attitude of the peasantry that finally spelt the ruin of Che's plans leading to his death.

So, it should no longer cause surprise among communists if a bourgeois ruling class implements pro-peasant measures. They may serve the dual purpose of eliminating the last vestiges of feudalism in the countryside and nipping in the bud any possibility of Leftist uprisings.

In this background, it would be interesting to analyse the possible motives and the anticipated results of the land reforms programme formulated by Mrs Gandhi's Congress.

"Extreme Tensions"

In spite of a spate of legislation in different States during the last 16/17 years, the failure to bring about effec-

tive land reforms in India has been admitted by 'all, including Government agencies. The Home Ministry's recent study has pointed out that the 'implementation of pledges taken in the past to attack the ills afflicting the Indian peasantry had not been fulfilled.' It warned that any further failure in this direction may lead to "a situation, where the discontented elements are compelled to organize themselves and the extreme tensions building up within the 'complex molecule' that is the Indian village, end in an explosion."

It is interesting to note that long before agrarian tensions shook Sriakulam, Chotanagpur or Koraput (all these areas are referred to in the Home Ministry's note), Mr Chester Bowles prepared a memorandum on the problems and prospects of Indian agriculture. It was dated October 30, 1967. This was during the Naxalbari uprising, which at that time was held by many, including communists, to be a sporadic upsurge by a handful of extremists, which would fizzle out in a few weeks.

To quote Mr Bowles: "Landless labourers may accept their wages of two or three rupees a day without much complaint as long as they know that everyone in their village is poor. However, when they see the landowners' incomes rising rapidly while their own rises much more slowly if at all, they become restless and resentful.

"In other words, the dramatic increases in food output which are occurring—and which should continue to grow in the years ahead—may lead to sharp disparities in income which in turn may create an expanding sense of economic and social injustice."

The green revolution while increasing food output has led at the same time to growing misery and increasing disparity in the distribution of income. The rise in the number of tenants during the decade 1951-61 indicates that small farmers were forced to sell their lands and became tenants. In 1951, according to the Census Report, 18% of the total cultivators in India were tenants. The

1961 Census data suggest that the number had risen to 24%.

Thus the threat of Naxalbari-type uprisings was becoming a growing reality in the Indian countryside. From the 1800s to the present day, Indian history has unrolled itself continuously against a backdrop of rural violence. It always threatened to break out when the Central authority was weak. Quite obviously the stress is being given on land reforms today to stave off a possible uprising.

But the failure in implementing land reforms so far and the reassertion of the old promises suggest the crisis in which the ruling classes are caught up.

While the Central leaders realize the danger of allowing the situation to drift, their dependence in the States on the landed gentry for votes hinder them from rushing forth with radical reforms.

This was evident from Mrs Gandhi's experience with the State Chief Ministers at the conference on land reforms in Delhi in November last year. The Chief Ministers were

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reluctant to lower the ceiling on land holdings as proposed by Mr Jagjivan Ram. This was in spite of the fact that Mrs Gandhi disavowed any intention "to force a very radical redistribution of land." (*Economic Times*, November 29).

Mrs Gandhi's predicament is understandable. However much she may wax eloquent about the need for land reforms from Delhi, in the States, she will have to rely on the vote-controlling power of the bosses of the rural areas.

(To be concluded)

The Press

On The Fall

P.C.D.

IT has been a charged week,— I mean last week—we have had, as it were, a tension and a release, the tension having resolved itself in President's rule. The doors of the United front are not shut. Intrigue, defection, elections, President's rule—multicoloured indeed our democracy is, in sharp contrast with the bleak one-party dictatorship of the proletariat.

The reaction of the owners of wealth to even mildly radical reforms is uniform—it is fear. The English language newspapers—*The Statesman*, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *Hindusthan Standard*, *Hindustan Times*, *Times of India* and *Patriot* (Hindu was not available) have unreservedly welcomed President's rule. They differed with one another over the approach only. While one group, notably *The Statesman*, found little justification for Dhawan to wait for Basu's credentials so long—weren't the strike and violence by themselves sufficient disqualifications?—a few others like *Patrika* and the *Times of India* thought that the process was necessary and prudent. *Patriot* loved it in its own fashion, but nevertheless seems to think it a hopeless certificate of destitution for the left all the same. The future is indeter-

minate but about the course to be adopted the attitude of *The Statesman* and *Hindustan Times* is both identical and forthright: (1) a smack of firm government; (2) a lengthy period of President's rule; (3) a thorough cleansing of the state's political machine. Witch-hunting is the new element that *The Statesman* sought to introduce into West Bengal politics, in its characteristic way. Now as always, it is the path-breaker. *The Hindustan Times* wrote that the Centre need not now be in a hurry to restore 'popular government' to any plausible combination or front.

Faith is the anchor though reality more often than not knocks it down. Confronted with ever-increasing crisis the bourgeoisie are uncertain whether to rule single handedly or jointly with the labour aristocracy of the right and the left CPI—stick, or stick-and-carrot simultaneously. *The Times of India* reflects this dilemma when it wrote that the problem was urgent because the Union Government could not manage the affairs of this highly radicalised State for long without arousing local patriotism on the one hand and giving a further edge to the CPM's demand for fresh election on the other.

Patrika and the *Standard* would not spell out clearly what they want. The situation is fluid and unpredictable. The *Standard* said, the question, can any alternative ministry be formed after the immediate worries are over and passions cool off—that is the million rupee question in West Bengal politics. *Patrika* maintained that it would be no solution to have short-term rule since the Governor will consider himself interim ruler and will hesitate to take long-term measures having long-term implications. *Patrika* earlier pleaded for a mini-front, the Congress joining it. All the Calcutta papers returned to the subject again and again during last week, *The Statesman* pre-eminently. 'At Long Last' was no ordinary heaving a sigh of relief. Never has the malignant passions of this paper displayed itself so nakedly. Horror chills the blood and the Bengali's must be rescued. 'A long suffering

people', as the paper put it, the Bengalis indeed are. But is the one year of UF misrule alone responsible for it?

The editors are concerned—nearly obsessed with—the dominance of violence organised or unorganised, but they fail to see the clear link between the monetary devaluation and the rise of 'murderous' 'crowd-hysteria'. When millions signify nothing in terms of money, they start signifying little in terms of life. No one forgets a sudden depreciation of himself for it is too painful. Unless he can thrust it on to some one else he carries it with him for the rest of his life. And the crowd as such never forgets its depreciations. For a meritorious and objective intellectual it is time to probe towards the centre of the primary question—what went wrong in the structure of our society, allowing the eruption of political 'barbarism'? One cannot begin to speak seriously of the future of culture or society without asking this question.

Cambodia

The coup in Cambodia has given the editorial writers an opportunity to dilate or pontificate on something other than Mrs Gandhi's socialism, law and order and defection et al. *The Statesman* is surprisingly dovish about the American policy towards Asia. While stating that "there is nothing to support that it (Washington) has in any way encouraged the organizers of the Cambodian coup", it has been hinted that the CIA, "the irresponsible muddler," may have a hand in the coup, which, if true, would act to the grave detriment of the USA's long term policies and interests." The editorial has noted that "in spite of his left leaning neutrality in foreign relations the mercurial Cambodian prince is so communist; indeed much of his domestic effort has been devoted to fight Cambodian communists." And *The Statesman* is convinced that this type of policy suits American long-term interests in Asia best.

Amrita Bazar Patrika has not spe-

culated about the impact of the coup on American interests in Asia but has vaguely observed, "the Vietnam war, Cambodia's strategic position and neutrality and its rather complex relations with North and South Vietnam, the NLF, the Laotian factions and Thailand would certainly cause the reverberations of the coup in Phnom Penh to reach far beyond the borders of Cambodia." The *Patrika* has sought the cause of the coup in the strategic necessity of the US "plunging into deeper involvement in Laos." As the editorial says, "It is not, therefore, improbable that the State within the American State chose to act as the Cambodian Interference Agency behind the coup."

The *Hindustan Times* too considers the coup to be dangerous for Cambodia's future. The paper thinks that the respect Prince Sihanouk "commands in the communist camp has been a far better guarantee of the security of their countries than all the battalions ranged behind" the prince. Now the seizure of power by a seemingly Right-dominated National Assembly under a premier who wants energetic action against communist infiltration, brings Cambodia in line with neighbouring Thailand and South Vietnam. Obviously unhappy with the development the paper thinks that "Cambodia would have better served in peace in South-East Asia under Prin Sihanouk's genuine though precarious neutrality."

Amidst this general concern for peace and stability the *Hindusthan Standard* alone seems mighty pleased. It has come out with an instant analysis of the coup as well as an editorial. The article entitled "Cambodian Coup Confusing" by Khagen De Sarkar "who was recently in Cambodia" has helped to leave the confusion worse confounded. He has recounted the history of Cambodia spicing it up with his souvenir of Swinging Phnom Penh and its peaceable people. "If you visit Phnom Penh", he says, "you will have a taste of it. The streets and boulevards are fine to look at. Bars, restaurants, dancing halls, cabarets,

night clubs and women-about-the-town filling up the gaps, if you care." Judged by this yardstick the Americans would turn out to be the most peaceable people on earth. Mr De Sarkar has also warned the readers from prematurely branding the coupists as rightists. Indeed how could they be! "The military personnel in Cambodia are patriotic", and "they are not militaristic—they are a part of the peaceable people of Cambodia." The new regime, he says, is unwilling to invite intervention of any Western power to turn Cambodia into a new theatre of war for, as he has profoundly concluded, "like Asiatic Cholera war in South-East Asia is terribly dangerous and contagious." After all this Mr De Sarkar observes that France is likely to help Sihanouk with arms if he sets about to stage a come-back because "France does not want to see South East Asia to be under the influence of the USA". If the coupists are not rightists and as chary of any Western contact as he makes them to be, how does the question of American influence arise?

The editorial is more candid about the paper's support to the generals in Phnom Penh. Calling the coup a "personal tragedy" for the Prince the editorial has pointed out that "the incident bears the stamp of constitutional propriety for Prince Sihanouk has been relieved of his authority by a resolution duly passed by the parliament." Inspired by the coup the editorial dreams about a bright future for Washington in the region. "If the Royal Laotian government, too, takes courage and stiffens its resistance to the Pathet Lao the march of communism in the region may be halted." The premises are simple. The overthrow of Sihanouk means the rout of communism. This rout would encourage Prince Souvanna Phouma, who is really lenient to the Pathet Lao, to stiffen his resistance and once he does the communists would turn tail and with the Pathet Lao thrown back, guerillas all over Asia would retreat into their foxholes!

A For Adolescents

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

THE adolescent figure is the latest sop in Bengali films and this formula has paid well in Arundhuti Devi's earlier film *Chhuti*. So why not try it again? But this time in *Megh-o-Roudra*, the trick has failed to click and the result is a tedious tale of two half-wit characters purposelessly strutting through the scenes. The hero, Sashibhusan, apparently a product of the Bengal Renaissance (modelled in the film curiously after Apurba in *Samapti*), comes back to the village after completing his studies and finds an obedient pupil in Giribala, the neighbour's daughter. The ambiguous relationship that ensues between the two has not been invested with any artistic purpose, so that after some time the whole affair becomes absolutely pointless and the varied expressions of mutual feelings quite unconvincing. It has neither the passionate appeal of an adult attachment nor the tender beauty of an adolescent romance, and this insipid yarn has been stretched beyond the limits of human endurance. The things become quite unbearable when the cruel hands of Drama intervene, Giribala's father suffers disgrace at the hands of a British magistrate and the patriotic instincts of Sashibhusan are aroused to boiling point. Here the patriotic braggadocio of Sashibhusan, which should have been treated as a satire on the impotent rage of a bourgeois liberal, has been delineated quite seriously and the audience is feasted with canloads of fiery speeches on foreign exploitation. The treatment is unbelievably casual, the photography has failed to evoke the Bengali village milieu and the overall technical quality is just average. Hasu Banerjee has a wax-doll appearance and she has not been able to infuse animated buoyancy and coyness into her personality, while Swarup Dutt's laboured efforts at wearing a baby face have gone terribly flat. But the most banal element

in the film is its music—another variation of the Tapan Sinha Arundhuti school using Tagore tunes as musical effects, showing the bankruptcy of the directors, imagination. This time the comedy reaches its climax when a Rabindrakirtan complete with drums, cymbals and the sandal-pasted singers is introduced in the film. We only hope that Rabindranath would not turn in his grave.

Aleyar Alo (directed by Mangal Chakrabarty) is again the usual good brother-bad-brother story. The bad brother murders the good brother and attempts to grab his property. But his moves are stalled by the timely counter-manoeuvres of a shrewd manager and the retribution comes in the form of a paralytic stroke. But the film does not end here and the story takes us through a labyrinth of violent emotions till Soumitra and Sabitri are able to change their parents and unite their destinies. By now everybody should get sufficiently bored with the goings-on; only one question seems to bother us all the time. What is the magic power that enables our heroes to walk into girls' chambers without sufficient introduction?

CORRECTION

The title of one of the Ray films mentioned in my letter (March 14) is not *Two Sisters* but *Two*, a short film which was not commercially shown. It is one of the best among Ray's films, if not the best.

ARJUN BANDYOPADHYAY
Naihati

For FRONTIER readers in

West India can contact

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MARCH 28, 1970

Letters

'Arrogant Rebels'

Is it a wonderful feat to insult professors, if not to beat them up? All this business becomes less and less intellectual, less and less ideological. The central target is clean missed and militancy is frittered away in activities which offer no real threat to the existing order. However, student indiscipline or student revolt is not confined to the Naxalites alone and to condemn them exclusively would be political opportunism. The 'Left' teachers' silence over the brutal murder of the Congressite headmaster at Hethora on the one hand and the reactionary acquiescence of the status quo-ist teachers over the police brutalities at Uttarpara College lay bare the hypocrisy that permeates our life, particularly the life of the greater part of the teaching community from whom one might still expect a certain degree of honesty, openmindedness and impartiality. The teacher fails in his most fundamental task—understanding the students and the requirements of the new times.

To the students the very concept of democracy appears sham. The real decisions are made, in their view, behind the scenes, in compromises between interlocking bureaucracies. They feel they do not get a hearing unless they throw bombs. We face here a worldwide problem, an apparent breakdown of communications between the generations. Not only that, with unemployment and insecurity abounding, with elders without morals or scruples running at each other's throat, the situation here is little short of desperate, and a significant part of our younger generation seem unwilling to accept the beliefs, values and institutions that have been handed down to them. They fight 'for sex, pot, and the freedom to curse', as Stokly Carmichael put it. Either revolution or anarchical chaos is apparently inevitable. In no case will there be a return to those pre-war tranquil days which the establi-

shed middle class so nostalgically longs for. No amount of moaning or howling by the Establishment, right or left, will solve the problem. Between now and the post-revolutionary consolidation there will be a grievous interregnum.

The attitude of the Right CPI is clear: it prefers peace to violence, order to chaos. It too wants socialism, but without tears. The Left CPI's attitude is not really different, but with certain prospects in view it keeps provision for options. It must appear to be leading the progressive forces and is worried that the unequivocal dynamism of the Naxalites may win over the ranks. At the same time it is afraid to encourage agitation to the point of sparking off a revolutionary movement. The clear result is that its credibility as a revolutionary party is fast wearing out.

The Naxalites are divided, and a section of them, shining in reflected glory in urban ease and security, are wildly optimistic. In their boundless arrogance—a vice specifically denounced by Mao—they profess that 'the present tactics of struggle are perfect' and anyone questioning them must be a base traitor. This is in direct opposition to Mao's teaching that the true revolutionary must

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be modest and prudent, good at uniting even with those who disagree and imbued with the spirit of self-criticism. But, most unfortunately, the Calcutta Naxalites forget that in the making of demarcation lies the essence of tactics, and that authentic debate works as a refreshing tonic.

It is not without significance that the Presidency College students of all groups and elements should adopt such a reckless attitude just as their forbears of the Hindu College had done a century ago. The historic role of young people rising from their receptiveness to new and challenging ideas has been that of pathfinders. But making revolution is a serious matter and a serious matter should not be taken lightly. The sort of rebellion staged by the Naxalite students of Presidency College for ends that are only superficially political plays into the hands of the very authorities whom the rebels believe they are attacking.

ARUN MAZUMDER
Calcutta

Not Too Courageous

Your city diarist, Mr G. Kapur, cried himself hoarse over violence in general—but never mentioned the incident in the Presidency college. In these days journalists too have so many hazards to avoid! Any unwary comment may invoke the wrath of the student heroes. Did some such consideration induce your silence over the recent teacher-beating business?

S. G.
Murshidabad

Strike-Breakers

Suri, saw a peculiar spectacle on March 17, the day of the strike called by the CPM in protest against the wrecking of the United Front by Ajoy Mukherjee. Most of the shops were closed. At about 10-30 a.m. a procession, mainly of local roughs, led by local leaders of the SUC, the Communist Party of India, the Bangla

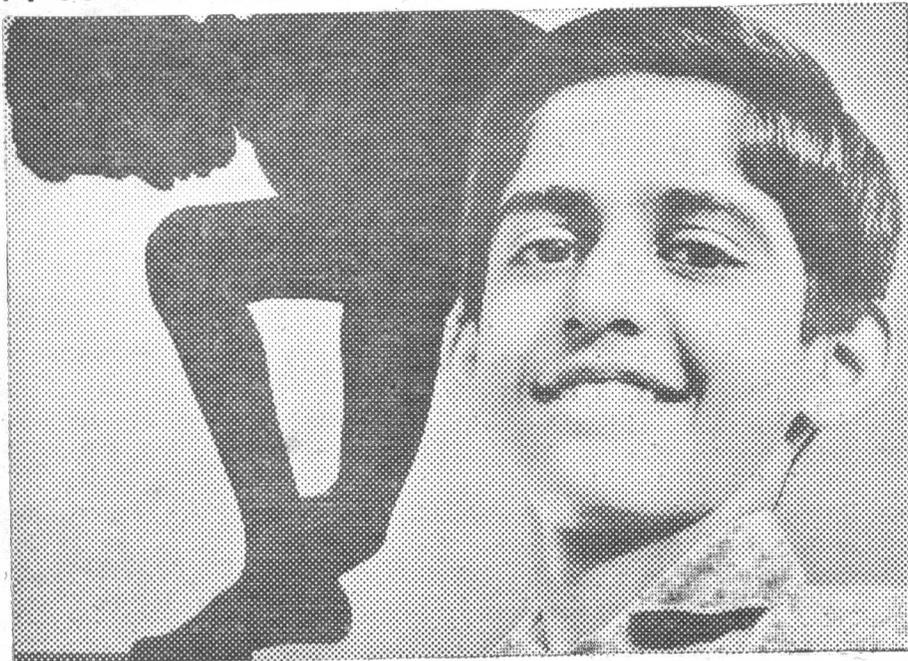
Congress etc., came marching on the main roads of the town. They carried lathis and spears. They threatened the shopkeepers that unless they opened their shops within 15 minutes, looting would be the penalty. One of the slogans the procession was shouting was "Subodh guards shall annihilate the red guards!" The local roughs were identified as the "mastans" who had brought about the 'defeat' of the Students Federation in the last college elections on behalf of the Chhatra Parishad.

It is not clear if this association of parties is only a local phenomenon or has wider implications.

ADINATH BHATTACHARYYA
Suri

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MARCH 28, 1970

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What's missing here?

We lack nothing but broad-based public participation and enough of what is known as the 'infrastructure', hotel accommodation, transport facilities and tourist amenities. For instance, the city of Bangkok alone has more hotel beds suitable for tourists than we have in India.

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Jumbo Jets will soon bring past India many thousand more people than have ever come this way.

They will need clean, comfortable accommodation; at least 23,000 more hotel beds are required by 1974. Wholesome, hygienically prepared food, more shops, restaurants, recreation facilities... all these are necessary now. Above all, a smiling, friendly welcome must await our visitors to make their visit a happy one.

What are we doing about it?

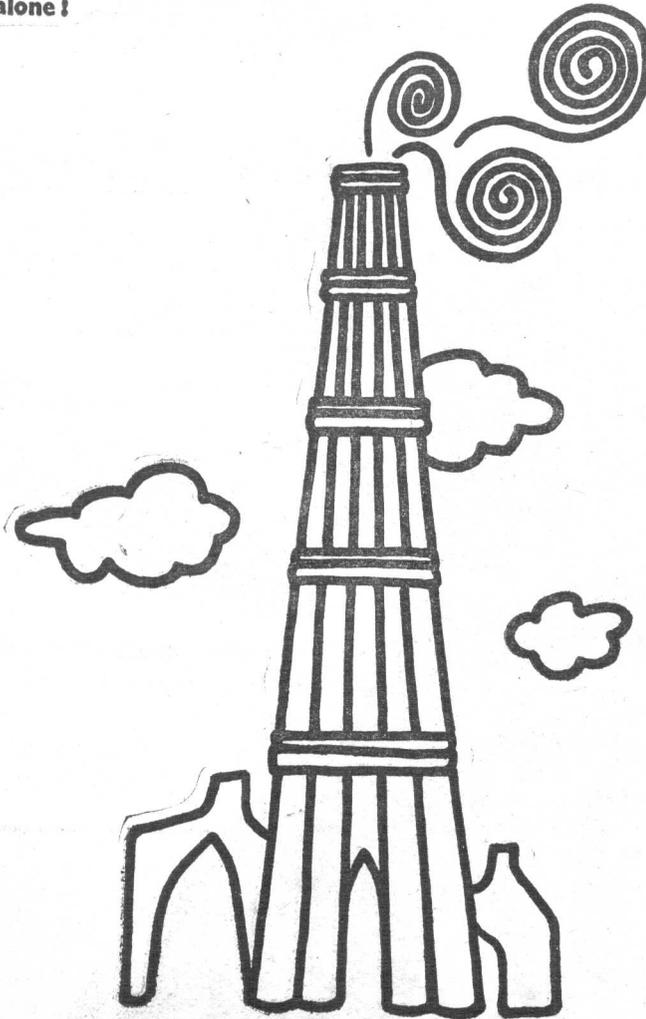
The Government is taking an increasingly active part to help build more hotels, improve air and transport services, provide new and better tourist facilities.

But Government effort alone is not enough. Tourism is everybody's business. Because people benefit wherever the tourist travels. Wealth flows from affluent countries to the less affluent, and within the country from the developed areas to the less developed and from the richer strata of society to the less rich. Everyone benefits from tourism.

So, join us in our efforts. Let us give the tourist the amenities he needs and see that he goes home happy. Each happy tourist means so many more will come next year. Shouldn't be too difficult for us. Isn't ours one of the world's oldest traditions in hospitality?

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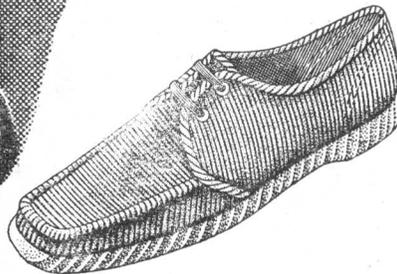
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